

an
alcoholic's
story

by
"Alkie"

WASKEW MILLER LIMITED
CAPETOWN

STORE

M 616.861 ALK

57/23



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN LIBRARIES

M 616.861 ALK
57/23

ALKIE

An alcoholic's
story

DATE DUE

Not **HSL STORE**

05 JUN 2014

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Mod 51

**an
alcoholic's
story**

by
“Alkie”

**MASKEW MILLER LIMITED
CAPE TOWN**

Thanks

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. A. Simpson Wells, who read through, corrected, and advised me with this story. We have corresponded on this problem of alcoholism for many years.

My sincere thanks goes to Mr. R. Banks for his painstaking advice while studying the first manuscript, and also to Mrs. Wilken and Miss Howard for typing the manuscript.

Special thanks to Dr. Hartman who treated me for Alcoholism, to my wife, and to Alcoholics Anonymous for keeping me sober by living the Alcoholics Anonymous way.

57/23

M. 616-864 ALK

Firstly, I wish to dedicate this book to the memory of my beloved parents.

Secondly, to the memory of the late Drs. Karl Bremer and Louis Bosman. and others, who performed great work in the field of Alcoholism.

P r e f a c e

by A. Simpson Wells, M.D., F.R.C.S. Ed. (retired)

THE anonymous author of this story has asked me to write a preface to the remarkable tale he has to tell. I have pleasure in doing this as I know that it is a fine record of what he has experienced.

He is a fully-qualified practitioner, who after years of intemperance which incapacitated him for the duties of his profession, has been reinstated.

During several years he has held appointments under the Transvaal Provincial Council and at present is Medical Superintendent of a Provincial Hospital. He has not forgotten the pit out of which he has been dug, and during several years has rendered devoted and successful treatment to many who like himself had "given way to drink".

This plain unvarnished tale will no doubt raise many questions, the answers to which are urgently needed in the interests of our country and its multiracial inhabitants.

Contents

- 1 DESPERATE BUT BEFRIENDED
- 2 "APPEAR BEFORE COUNCIL"
- 3 COMMITTED TO AN INSTITUTION
- 4 THE INSTITUTION
- 5 MY COMEBACKS
- 6 LOVE ENTERS MY LIFE
- 7 I REALIZE I AM AN ALCOHOLIC
- 8 MY AMBITION FULFILLED
- 9 ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS ENTERS MY LIFE

- I A MISCELLANY OF LETTERS
- II ALCOHOLISM AND ITS TREATMENT
- III HOSPITALIZATION OF ALCOHOLICS IN PROVINCIAL HOSPITALS
- IV A GUIDE TO THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Introduction

AFTER qualifying as a doctor, I began practice in my home town in the Transvaal, where I lived happily with my wife, Dora, and our little boy, Johnnie. But it was not succesful because too many people had known me as a child and still thought I was one. Although my parents gave me everything one could desire — a home, a motor-car, business rooms, and an allowance to help — I felt that I had to get elsewhere to earn my own living. The break came, and I was appointed to a permanent billet in South-West Africa. Dora objected to the prospect of leaving her relatives and refused to accompany me. I tried desperately to persuade her, but she stubbornly objected, and in the end remained with her parents. The ultimate result was divorce.

At this stage of my life I had taken one drink — a beer shandy — after the final medical examination results had been published. But in South-West Africa my drinking life began, not because of remorse or loneliness, but more due to trying to be smart. I had a good billet which paid handsomely. I was young and attracted much attention from young ladies and young people in general. I was never lonely, on the contrary, I was always either busy with my work or occupied in entertaining others to drinks and vice versa.

Very rapidly I could play all the games that counted in society, and especially in clubs, such as golf, snooker, billiards and for gambling purposes, poker, dice, matches, and darts.

With these games, drinks were always associated, and becoming quite an expert at these games I found more friends and others seeking my association. It meant later hours, more drinking, and imbibing of stronger drinks.

Beer became too long, thus the famous German "Kleine, Kleine" (a small beer and brandy) became the tune of the day. Then

I would prefer drinking one glass of beer and about six brandies together. Drinking a single brandy followed by a sip of beer and so on. Later I dropped the beer and used only brandy.

During my last years in South-West Africa I met a young lady teacher and fell wildly in love again. She was a real country girl and did not know the dangers of drinking. She joined us and within a short period she could also "put it away" as the saying goes.

My practice paid well but I never had a spare penny. I fell deeply into debt and started to apply for billets in the Union. At last I was lucky and was actually promoted to a better billet. The lady teacher and myself married. We had no children, and the marriage landed on the rocks due to my excessive drinking — although I realized that the drinking was getting me down and my affairs were becoming unmanageable. She also tried to get assistance from doctors and others, without avail.

Before she filed divorce proceedings against me, I had tried a general hospital, two nursing homes and even two institutions where nervous conditions were treated. All these efforts proved useless, because by this time I was fast becoming a drug-addict as well. By substituting sedatives for alcohol, I could keep off drink for as long as six months. But during this time I lived on drugs. Then I would leave the drugs and go on the drink again. All this time my relatives and dear friends disappeared into oblivion. My parents were very distressed, but thank God there always remained a spark of hope in me and I still could feel that some day I would attain serenity.

My parents lived long enough to share my triumph over alcohol and drugs, which was brought about by the Grace of God and my sincere desire to accept Him again, although in my years of drinking I had cursed the laws of God and Man.

I have to thank medical treatment and particularly Alcoholics Anonymous for my victory.

1. DESPERATE BUT BEFRIENDED

I WAS walking slowly, deep in thought towards the Railway Station in Pretoria. Time was no object, the pubs did not open until ten o'clock.

My once black serge suit had seen better days; it was now but a cover for my thick-set frame. It was shiny in patches, and the brown shoes I sported did not match. My shirt was also in need of a wash and the tie I wore was worn and faded.

My much neglected hair now surfeited with scurf was driving me frantic with irritation, but why worry, it was a drink I wanted. The fact that I was minus a hat did nothing to mitigate my discomfort.

Later that day, "Hello Doc" I hear.

I look surprised to see an old acquaintance, but feel ashamed, because this man has known me in better days. I pretend that I am in a hurry and reply curtly.

"Hello, Mr. Still, how do you do?"

It does not work, and Mr. Still asks:

"What are you doing with yourself nowadays?"

He notices the pile of papers under my arm, which are uncompleted insurance forms. These I carry every day and try to insure somebody, but I am no insurance salesman and business is not too good. But it is at least a "front".

Mr. Still looks pensively at me and says:

"Well, good-bye, Doc. Glad to have seen you."

What a liar! I thought as I walked a little faster, toward the station.

"I need a drink after that" I muse to myself and walk into the King's Arms Hotel public bar. Years ago I always frequented the private bar, but now I am afraid I may meet an old friend who knew me when I was a proud medical practitioner.

"Give me a double please", I demand.

"Yes, come on, I can afford it to-day. I earned £10 commission on a big policy," I lie.

An hour ago I pleaded with the inspector of the insurance company to advance me £10 to pay for my board.

I tender a £5 note in payment for the drink and order another double. Two men join me at the counter, I recognize them as two railwaymen I know, and proudly invite them to join me in a drink. They agree and name their drinks. Another two rounds is paid for by me, who feels very satisfied and happy.

"What about a game of snooker, Doc?" another voice came from behind.

"Make it a foursome," is suggested by Doc's friends.

"Let's take a drink in with us, the table will be ready in a minute, they are on the blue ball."

"O.K. its on me, I am in the chair to-day," say I.

It is four drinks again, two double brandies, two single plus a "chaser" (a small beer).

With these drinks we stroll single file into the stuffy, smoky billiard-room, where about a dozen men are talking, smoking, and drinking noisily. After a few cheerful salutations the foursome finds seats on an old couch.

The black ball goes down and the fourth man who joined the party, whose name is Van, suggests that I and Jim play himself and Piet.

"What about five shillings in the pocket," says Van and clang go his two half crowns into the nearest pocket, followed by mine and Piet's five shillings. Jim comes up to me and softly asks if I won't put up his stakes. He will repay it later. I agree. One pound is on the game.

"Winners take the money and losers pay for the table and drinks, just to make it more interesting," suggests one.

"Of course," all agree.

The game is on. My pal and I are on the losing side but struggle hard to get the lead.

"Let's have the drinks in the meanwhile," said one.

The drinks are ordered.

After a good game the black is needed for a win, everyone plays carefully to sink the winning ball. The ball goes down in a fluke shot to Piet.

Van collects the money and divides it between himself and Piet.

"Let's have our revenge!" cries Jim.

I pay for the drinks while Piet and Van put up the balls. The same amount of money is again put in the pocket. I pay again for my partner.

The game is on, drinks are ordered earlier than last time. And they begin to work. Everyone is now cheerful and the talk and laughter is now loud and hearty.

The saloon has become more smoky and the crowd has increased to two dozen. The lights are on, as they always are. Time is of little consequence in this place.

I and my pal lose the game again.

"Sorry you lost, Doc, we will have a revenge later again," Van says as he strolls toward the bar.

They cannot play a third game as the common ruling of players are two games in succession only, if other players are waiting. Nevertheless Van puts his name on the slate again for a later game when his turn comes.

"We will have double or quits, eb, Doc?"

They are all now at the bar counter again and Van's suggests dice.

"See if you can beat us with dice."

The game of dice throwing start and the drinks are ordered, loser to pay.

Van throws four kings in one and goes out, next I go out with three aces in one, then the duel is on between Piet and Jim. After quite a hard battle Piet wins. Jim loses, and has no money. I pay again.

Jim wants a revenge; he has a dry leg, and is sure to win. He starts off with four kings in three and is tied by Piet. The tie is

played and Piet wins. The game proceeds and it is myself and Jim at the end. I win. Jim's dry leg is off. Now they all start even again. Drinks are ordered. This time Piet loses and pays.

He now wants a dry leg. Another game is played. Van loses and pays. Another game starts, Van having a dry leg. I lose and pay. I want a dry leg and lose dry leg and all.

Jim's issue is shouted out as it is his turn at the billiard table again.

Now for the first time they become aware of the time, as the barman reminds them it is already nine (9 p.m.) and that it will be the last game.

"Oh, we can easily finish two games before closing time," I shout.

Drinks are carried into the saloon again, same odds are placed on the game again and play is commenced. The game is slower than contemplated because my pal and I are leading, and the other two are playing for snookers. The game finishes in a tie. It is decided that the three main colours, black, pink, and blue balls come up. After ten more minutes the game is over and I have lost again and squared my "pal's" debts.

"Time gentlemen," is heard in the bar as the foursome enter.

"Let's have a final." All agree, the barman at once pours the drinks out, and helps himself to one.

Two other men stumble into the bar, the barman objects, but is told that they will have their drinks in the lounge.

"Will you fellows join us," they address me simultaneously.

"O.K.," says I.

Doubles and a few extra bottles of beer are ordered and carried into the lounge. Here a game of matches is proposed, loser pays for fish and chips at old Brown's, a café near-by.

The drinks are swallowed slower than before, and there is a lot of small talk, sometimes argumentative, sometimes threatening, but always ending as befits gentlemen, for drunken men are always very proud of their exemplary behaviour.

The matches game is finished in the meantime and the last two

were duly elected as losers.

Chairs are pushed about noisily, everyone talks loudly and with unbalanced tread all stroll out of the front door of the hotel towards the café.

"Hallo Brownie," all the men shout with right hand raised.

"Fish and chips all round," is ordered from the well-known old waiter.

"Let's have a cold drink. Yes, Coca-cola with a kick in it," suggest I.

Brownie serves the coca-cola himself with the necessary ingredient—brandy. These coca-cola drinks cost four times the ordinary price.

It is 1.15 a.m. when we walk out of the café, shouting coarse loud "cheerios" to each other.

I walk home silently, lost in thought. Thoughts about the good old days. Really to-night was wonderful—just like the old times. All these nice friends . . . it makes life worth living again. . . .

Suddenly I stop, my pile of insurance papers still under my left arm, and my right hand automatically goes to my hip pocket.

"Thank God," I whisper, "I thought I had lost it."

In my hip pocket is a half bottle of brandy, it used to be XYZ, but I care less nowadays about the name as long as it is brandy. The lifesaver for to-morrow morning, especially when I feel lonely, forgotten, and my head throbs.

I walk slowly towards my home which is a small stuffy single-room in a second-rate boarding house. On my face is a pleased and stupid expression. The whole world belongs to me. I have no cares, my wife has divorced me years ago, my children by my first marriage are cared for, nobody actually knows where I am and nobody cares less, so what do I care? I had a wonderful evening with my friends and my only worry is the next drink, and that is right in my pocket!

I enter by the back gate of the boarding house, walking more softly and slower now, because I am walking on cement flooring and along a row of bedrooms.

I feel round in my pocket and after some time locate the key of my room, open it and close it immediately behind as if I am afraid of somebody entering the room with me.

"Hallo Doc!" I hear a woman's voice.

Although the voice is familiar, for a moment I am startled.

I try the wall switch and find it is already on, the light has been switched off at the bedside. Walking carefully toward the bed I bend to put the light on.

"Leave the light alone, Doc," the woman whispers. "Let's have a drink in the dark; I brought a bottle along."

"God, Mabel, you've saved my life—I am dying for a drink."

Slumping on the bed I find the woman's head and kiss her. A brandy deserves that, two glasses are poured in the dark, tot measuring does not worry us. A little water added, clink of the glasses and with one gulp the drink is swallowed.

The empty glasses are carefully placed on a chair and the bottle under the bed handy for future reference.

A loving embrace again follows and I start undressing, I do not worry about pyjamas and then sit on the edge of the bed again.

"A night-cap is indicated." I say and the previous procedure is again followed. I now lie on the bed on part of the blankets.

"Does Alf know that you are here, my dear?" I ask.

"Yes, he knows that I come to you every night, and he now threatens to put me away, if I do not stop drinking."

"What is he going to do?"

"He is going to see a magistrate to-morrow to commit me to that institution which you sent me to a few years ago. Do you remember?"

"Yes, Mabel, but judging from the results you seem to have come back worse than ever."

"Yes, Doc, there we smuggled in drinks by the bottles. The heads drank with us too; and men use to visit us."

"But Alf can't send you back there again. You will go to the dogs!"

"Alf said he will force me to go because things cannot be worse than they are now. I am ruining everybody's life; even yours, Doc."

"You are not spoiling my life—I have nothing to live for. I am living in the grand shadows of yesterday."

"Oh, Doc, what can we do about it? I mean Alf sending me away. I do not want to leave you."

"You must go, it will be better for both of us. You have a good husband and two grown-up children:"

"Lately Alf has become so cold towards me, he beats me and when I get passionate he throws water over me. I can't stand it any longer."

"Well, it's getting light outside and we haven't slept yet. Let's have a drink and sleep this thing over."

The suggestion was mine.

After the drink I lie back and in a muddled state, and meditate. I can see Alf and Mabel at the Magistrate's office, then Mabel going away, and then my supply of drink stopped. Mabel has been a real old sport these last three months.

She always had money for a bottle. If she goes, things will not go so well. I turn towards Mabel and kiss her giving her a big hug at the same time.

After a short deep sleep I wake up and see that it is already bright daylight. I jump up and put on my trousers, waking Mabel. In the commotion I measure out a stiff "eye-opener" for each, a little water added, and down it goes. Both shudder as the brandy flows down into our stomachs.

We stare at each other, one looking more haggard than the other, hair dishevelled, unwashed sleepy eyes, and once more embrace each other.

"What about another drink?" Mabel says.

"The bottle is empty." I hold up the empty bottle.

Mabel starts crying and tears stream down her cheeks.

"What am I going to do now? Alf will kill me."

I know the signs of "babalaas" remorse, pull out my half bottle,

which I very carefully hid in the darkness of the night. I have a swig out of the bottle, first holding my thumb about halfway down the bottle, give six big swallows, equal to three good doubles, and hand the rest of the bottle to Mabel, with the reminder that she must save me at least a tot.

It is five minutes to nine before we leave the room, more or less human again. I, with my papers under my arm, and Mabel with her handbag in which both of us know there is at least enough money to buy another half-jack.

I have quietly counted my money, I still have £2 15s. 6d. in my pocket, so I feel happy and assured. My board and lodging payment can wait until I am again approached. I have been approached numerous times, but always have a ready excuse. I am actually just sleeping in the room and never eat in the boarding house because I cannot keep regular hours. My "work" and "interviews" with prospective "clients" keep me busy, and above all the landlord is a drunkard like myself; but in reality I am ashamed to attend meals because my clothes are getting shabbier and I feel conscious of the fact that everybody knows that I am a "good for nothing." I am definitely happier away from my lodging.

Stealthily we slink out towards the town. We take a side road because the main road passes Alf's offices, and he might be on the look-out for his wife.

Getting near the bottle store Mabel takes out 5/10 and hands it over to me with the words:

"Doc, buy a half-jack and meet me in Burghers Park. Do hurry up, I'm dying for a drink."

I go into the bottle store and buy two half-jacks, one is wrapped up, and the other slipped into my hip pocket. My appearance is quite passable and the assistant says nothing and writes my address in the book.

Now well fortified I walk into the café next door and buy a tin of bully beef, and make straight for the park.

On the way to the park is a public telephone booth into which I slip and have a quarter out of my own half-jack.

On one of the lawns I find Mabel waiting for me. She quickly asks me if I bought the bottle. . . . Did I see any sign of Alf? . . . Did the bottle store assistant ask anything? I am evasive and beckon her to a summer-house where we have a quick one out of the wrapped up bottle. The bully-beef tin is opened; Mabel does not feel like eating so I polish off the meat. Then we leisurely finish one half-jack.

"I must go home now, before Alf goes for his lunch. If I don't see you again, be a good boy," Mabel says.

Walking slowly towards and out of the gate I accompany her towards her home.

On the last corner, I briskly turn around and say:

"Cheerio, Mabel."

That was the last I ever saw of her; she went, and I never saw or heard her again.

This abruptly ended a drunken but friendly companionship, and I suddenly found myself alone in the world again.

I walked toward the centre of Pretoria, now all hustle and bustle as it is about eleven o'clock in the morning. I entered a café bioscope; and went straight to the lavatory to have another swig out of the precious bottle still in my hip pocket.

In the bioscope I tried to concentrate on the picture, it wasn't bad-stuff: a cowboy story with a lot of shooting, and soon over as I came in at the tail-end of the picture. I sat through the interval, fearfully watching people coming in and going out. The café bioscope was a frequent haunt of mine at that time, to pass the time away. The time did pass unendingly and my plight became worse and worse.

The picture started again and it was not long after this that an usherette touched me on the shoulder and asked me if I would kindly stop sleeping. I felt ashamed and walked out indignantly.

That called for another drink, I went into the wash-up of the nearest hotel and finished the half-jack, and left the empty bottle on the wash basin.

Five minutes later I was walking slowly towards the station in Kruger Street, aimlessly, seemingly in deep thought but just thinking about nothing. It was a hot day and the sun was burning on my bare head, my hair was long and I thought that I would have to have a haircut shortly, but where would the money come from?

Very relieved and with a sigh I sat down in the Billiard saloon of the hotel near the station. Both tables are occupied and I knew all the men playing.

The caretaker comes up to me with a drink in his hand, offers it to me and sits down.

"Doc," says the old man, "I am going off at six o'clock to-night, I want you to come with me to Hercules to-night.."

"What for?"

"To have a decent meal and my wife wants to talk to you. You know that you are dear to us."

"But I can't come to-night, what about another night? To-night I have an appointment with a certain person who is interested in insurance."

"If you are still here at that time please come home with me," the old man insisted.

"Thanks awfully."

I strolled into the bar and felt a few men were looking at me, but took no notice of it and called the barman to the side.

"Please give me a few drinks on the cuff. I'll settle with you later; I'm going to write a big policy to-night," I asked.

"O.K., but this once only and not again," I was told.

Ordering two double brandies, I took them to the billiard-room, pretending to take somebody else a drink, once inside the billiard-room, I poured the two doubles together and start sipping slowly. I was now thinking of Mabel. . . . will I see her again

to-night or has Alf sent her away? Oh, forget about it! . . . but I could not. . . . I wondered if she was in my room, but I dared not go to my room during the day, the people would think I was just loafing about.

While just sitting there, an old acquaintance sat down next to me and offered me another drink. I accepted it. The man went out, to return almost immediately with the necessary drinks.

"Doc, I want to talk to you confidentially and in private," he nodded with his head towards the door.

We both walked out of the door leading into the lounge and sought a quiet table.

"Yes! What's the secrecy about?" I inquired.

"You can help me, Doc."

I stared at the man who I knew was quite a good sort of a fellow.

"I want you to do a job for me—you can, being a doctor. I got a woman in trouble and I'm going mad with worry."

I just stared.

"Waiter, bring us more drinks. Same, Doc? Two doubles with water."

"I will pay you £50 cash and will never speak about it."

I thought £50 was a lot of money, but I did not know if I was still registered as a medical practitioner, because I had had trouble with the council about writing a cheque when I had no funds in the bank, I couldn't remember what happened. Was I still on the register or not? I knew what this man wanted, it was an easy £50, but I had no instruments, no facilities, couldn't write a prescription. This added to my misery. Now what?

"I have no instruments, I can't do it." I answered.

"That's easy, I have a pal working at the 'Mental' and he promised to get the necessary instruments, if you will do it. He recommended you and said that you are a good pal of his and you will help me."

I knew who he was speaking about but couldn't understand why this other man recommended me because I had never per-

formed such an operation. I was thinking hard, and with difficulty because I had swallowed quite a few drinks that day, but I would have liked a few more and here was an easy wicket.

"Give me £5 on deposit now, so that I can buy a few odds and ends I need for the case, and I'll meet you here again at 9.30 to-morrow morning."

"That's a bargain, but Doc, you must not let me down—I'd break your neck."

He pulled out a packet of notes and I could not believe my eyes—this was easy money. He handed me a fiver.

"Oh, what is the time?" I inquired. "I must catch a chemist to purchase the necessary articles." I had long ago sold my wrist-watch for next to nothing to buy a drink.

"It is 5 p.m. now. Have another quick one, because I have to go too and tell the lady everything will be O.K."

Another drink followed and I was not feeling too well but still had ideas.

After the drink I immediately went to the nearest bottle store to buy two half-jacks, one for to-night and one for to-morrow. The chemist was just next door to the bottle store but I did not enter it.

Now, would I go home or not? No! it was still too early, so I walked back to the hotel.

On the threshold I met the old caretaker. He was very pleased to see me, hooked his arm into mine, and escorted me to a car. Within a few minutes we were off to Hercules.

The old lady met me at the door and showed me into the lounge. Drinks were poured out, which we drank together.

A wonderful dinner was ready and I enjoyed it.

After a pleasant conversation I was shown to a near room, clean pyjamas laid out and the blankets turned back.

I closed the door, had another drink and started to undress. The clean pyjamas were lovely but my body felt dirty. It was not long before I fell asleep.

Very early the next morning coffee was brought into the room,

it was hot. I did not feel like coffee but like a drink. I still had my two half-jacks. One was empty and I could not remember when I finished it, it was under my pillow. I must have finished it during the night. The full bottle was opened and placing my thumb on a certain mark halfway down, I swallowed six times. I shuddered and felt the warmth in my stomach, and presently I felt much better. I coughed hard, lit a cigarette, then sipped the coffee again.

The old man brought me an early newspaper.

When in the bathroom having a wash, I decided to go to a barber to-day for a shave and haircut. . . . I could afford it. What about that appointment? Oh, yes, it can wait, I must make myself look respectable first.

After breakfast we left for town, the old man to work and I just to town, with the papers still with me.

I was wondering why these two old people were so kind to me. Not one of them spoke about my drinking or uttered the slightest suggestion to me. I dispelled all ideas that these good people wanted to "convert" me. And I never saw them again.

In town I went to a barber's shop where I was not known and told them I had come from a long journey and felt very dirty. I wanted a shave, haircut and shampoo, also a face massage. The barber was pleased and talkative. I felt like a new man when I left there. My eyes noticed the time in the shop. It was nine o'clock. Brandy time.

First I went to a near-by café and bought a tin of bully beef and then to the nearest hotel to finish my half-jack. After this I bought another half-jack and slipped it in my hip pocket. Now the world belonged to me.

Before I knew where I was leading to, I was on my way toward my room. Carefully I entered the back gate and found myself in my room. Looked around for any evidence of something. What? Was Mabel there? No, I could not see anything of note, and my bed was made, and the water in the jug was not touched. I placed my bully beef in the top drawer, which was empty

and was just about to take a drink when somebody knocked on the door.

Putting down the half-jack I answered the door. There was my landlady, smiling as she always smiled. She was one of those good ladies with a heart of gold, and was always misunderstood.

"Doc," she said, "a man came to look for you, and said he'd be back at 10.30 to have tea with you here."

"Dark or blonde?" I asked.

"Light brown hair and an old friend of yours; you must please stay and bring him to the lounge for tea when he comes."

"Thank you," I said very much relieved because the other man I had an appointment with at 9.30 was dark.

"This calls for a stimulant," I mused to myself and took a stiff drink.

I looked at myself in the mirror and thought that it was well that I had a haircut; if only my collar and shirt were a bit cleaner.

I opened the drawer in which I had just pushed in my shirts and collars lately, but to my surprise it was empty. I tried the other drawer, with the same result. I had been robbed. It must have happened last night, but I had the key to my room. What happened? This really called for a drink, I had another sip, and sat down on the only chair in the room, trying to solve the problem of my missing clothes. I remembered well that I had three dirty shirts, and about six pairs of socks. Socks which needed repair badly in the drawer, and a few old dirty torn handkerchiefs.

I was now getting worried about this man coming to see me. . . was he a detective? or perhaps Mabel's husband, Alf?

I was still sitting in this state when I heard a brisk walk and a short knock on the door, then a stoutish man with blonde hair entered. I could not place him at all.

"Let me introduce myself to you, you seem to be uncertain as to my identity," said this man in a cultured voice. "I am Pieter Mann from Port Elizabeth, and have been transferred to the insurance firm for which you are working."

What did this mean? Did he want the money back that I had

received from the Company? Mann must have seen anxiety on my face, because he then took me by the arm and said,

"Come on, let's have a cup of tea and talk matters over."

During tea Mann told me that he was very concerned about my condition, and that he and his wife gained entrance to my room last night and removed all the dirty clothing, which his wife was fixing up for me.

He also told me that after tea he was taking me down to see another man to have me removed from these lodgings and to place me in a Nursing home for treatment.

I thought this was all very nice indeed, but felt uncertain as to the ulterior motive of this man, whom I could not place then, but whom I have never forgotten since. I could see that he was deeply serious and that he had a fine personality. I decided that, come what may, I would listen to this man and see what would eventualize.

After tea the man drove me to the building in which the insurance company had its offices, but we went to another office. Above this office I noticed the designation, "*Christelike Maatskaplike Raad van Suid-Afrika*."

We entered, and encountered a pleasant, clean-shaven, dark-complexioned man. He pointed to two chairs, after introducing himself and pushed the outer door to.

He informed me that there were complaints against me from my landlady, a member of his council, but that I should not worry about that, as my board and lodging had been paid for at least another month, on condition that I would go to a Nursing Home in Johannesburg where I could be cured. This man was firm and gave me to understand that if I did not do so voluntarily, I would be arrested and forced into this "Nursing Home." I wondered vaguely what kind of "Nursing Home" this was into which you could be forced. I never heard of such a place. Further this man explained that it was a Retreat for Alcoholics and I would find something useful to do there in my medical capacity and would be remunerated for it. This place had many sport-

ing facilities and was just the place where I should go. It would cost nothing.

"We will give you fourteen days to think it over, Doc, but remember we want to help you. One must sometimes be cruel to be kind," the man finished up.

"And remember that you must stay off drink for at least one week before we take you to this place."

Mann and I were standing up ready to leave when the phone rang. The man answered it, replaced the receiver and turned to Mann, saying:

"Dr. Peters, the advocate, across the passage, wishes to see Doc, will you please take him there?"

I was beginning to get thirsty, and when we were out of the office I asked Mann where the lavatories were. I slipped into a lavatory and took a sip out of my half-jack which was in my hip pocket all the time.

Rejoining Mann, we entered an office a few doors away, and were met by another friendly man, with a small moustache, kind eyes, and an air of distinction.

I can still see those eyes before me. He stood up and shook hands with me, and asked me to be seated while he glanced over a few papers before him. Those few minutes made my heart beat a little faster. . . . what was it about? He was so close to me that I saw the heading of the letter. It was the South African Medical and Dental Council. I became quite goosefleshed and felt guilty. Of what, I had no idea at all.

"Doc, you must appear before the Medical Council within the next few days, at East London. You know what it is about. Can you make it?" He questioned me looking straight in the eye.

"But how did you get these letters?" I asked.

"Through your brother, who was kind enough to enclose £15 for your train fare. Het wrote me a letter, and phoned me about seven days ago and begged me to find you so that you could answer the summons. That was where Mr. Mann came in—he searched Pretoria for you and found you."

"Well, what does the summons say?" I asked.

"Simply that you should appear before the full Council and answer certain questions. When I heard that you were located I booked your seat on the train."

I thought for a moment: here are three men who are comparative strangers to me, and they take such great interest in me. These people were genuine, I could feel it. I felt shaken and was thinking a bit clearer. The brandy probably made me feel audacious, but it also calmed me momentarily.

"I will go to East London, and thank you very much for all your trouble."

"Best of luck, Doc, and do let me hear from you again. Mr. Mann will see you on to the train."

Words failed me because I was now being treated like a child, I mumbled something and we left him sitting behind his desk with a sad smile.

Mann took me home in silence. When he dropped me at my lodgings he promised that he would see me that same night, and reminded me that my train would leave Pretoria station the next morning.

Thank God, I forgot all about that other man who asked me to help him and I never saw him again.

After Mann had left, I rushed to the station to inquire when the train was leaving for East London and was informed that it left at 7.30 a.m. This is what I simply had to know, because I had to buy a bottle for the journey.

I went to the bottle store and bought it, also a half-jack for the night. Then I proceeded homewards. On my way I stepped into a hotel where I had not been for a long time.

The manager knew me well. He also drank heavily but he could afford it, and, above all, could stand his liquor.

He asked me where I had been all this long time and said that I was an utter stranger. I had a few drinks with him and he invited me for lunch, I accepted it, and had a good free feed, during which time I asked him about the Retreat in Johannesburg. He

told me it was a marvellous place, that he knew of a few men who had been there, and were different men to-day. He also told me that there was a good deal of freedom at this Retreat if you behaved yourself. So I was satisfied in a way, but I still had other things on my mind. I thanked him for the fine lunch, collected my bottle in his office, and left for my room.

In my room I sat down on the bed and placing my head between my hands, looked straight ahead of me. I felt like praying but could not think of the right words. I was thinking very much of my previous life, my Christian home, my mother. I thought I was pleased that she was dead, because it would have broken her heart to see me in this state. I remembered how she took in washing to earn extra money for my studies and how proud she was when I qualified. How she fretted about my second marriage. . . . Little did she know that it was due to my drinking habits that my second marriage was wrecked. Giving cocktail parties nearly every week which I could ill afford, spending most of my time in the clubs and caring little about my work and profession, it was not surprising that my wife became tired of my way of life, and had to seek some kind of consolation in other people's company. Before this present time, I had been without fixed employment for a long period. I had done locums here and there, and did do not do them justice. It was tough on the men I relieved. I caused anxiety and usually they returned before their holidays were over to ask me to leave. I could not think professionally any more; my only worry was where my next drink should come from. At various stages I visited old friends and sometimes colleagues and borrowed money from them, never to repay it. Just for drink.

As I sat, a series of thoughts trailed through my mind. I could remember sleeping with a night watchman next to his paraffin-tin fire for a few nights because I could not get any accommodation in Pretoria. It was winter and I had a fairly good looking leather overcoat, which I had borrowed somewhere. This I sold

eventually for one pound to obtain a few drinks. His Majesty King Brandy....

How I was admitted by a night watchman of a hotel one night, when looking for accommodation. I had one pound in my pocket which I had borrowed from a Christian Scientist. I went into an empty double room, and next morning the waiter mistook me for somebody else and I was served with breakfast in bed. When I walked out of the hotel the proprietor was furious with me and said that he knew my kind. I must have changed greatly, because in that same hotel I was married and gave a big splash, afterwards occupying a flat at expensive rates.

How I went to borrow flannel trousers from an old patient of mine. I told him that the pair I had on was the only one in my possession, and he gave me another pair. I promised to return them, but never did. Having them on and finding them miles too big for me, I sold them for ten shillings. Again for Brandy.

Yes, I was fast becoming a tramp, and here friendly people had emerged from nowhere trying to assist me. But, I wondered, what could they achieve? I felt sore because I was threatened in one way, treated as a child, and had received a summons for something I knew nothing about.

I was still lost in thought when suddenly a man walked in. I stood up at once, bewildered for a moment. Then I realized it was only one of my fellow lodgers. He was also a drunk and was not working because he was suing the Railway for an injury to one of his eyes. He maintained this had happened at work. I knew it had happened in a drunken brawl, but he was sure that he would get a few thousand pounds from the Railways, and lived under that false impression. He did not eat at the boarding house either, and lived as I did.

"Hallo, Doc!" he started, "nice to see you again. I've just heard that the Railways are going to pay me out for my eye."

He had told me this yarn a thousand times already.

"Well, let's drink on it," I said and I opened my half-jack. The other bottle I had securely hidden under my mattress; these acts I

did more or less unconsciously at that stage.

"Is that all you have? Come to my room and bring the half bottle. I have more glasses than you have." He was right. He usually had plenty of glasses but no drinks, and it was a habit of his to invite you to his room with your own bottle.

His room was next door. We entered it and he officiated. We had a stiff one and shortly afterwards another stiff one. My half-jack was empty. I swore not to open my other bottle or even tell him about it. Drunkards are very selfish and secretive. They serve only one master. Brandy.

He then related his old story again and told me that he had met his wife in town and that he was going back to her as she had changed completely towards him. He said how heavenly it would be to be away from this filthy boarding house with all its drunks. We were the only two respectable people here. I agreed with him.

"Bucky," I said, "will you look after my room when I am away. I am going to East London on business to-morrow."

There would be nothing in my room, because all my possessions were going with me in one suitcase, but I just said it and when he said "O.K.," I felt better. Why I did not know.

"Doc, that will cost you a drink."

"I really have no more. I think we'd better go to town quickly because I will have to buy some *padkos* and then we can have a few drinks at the nearest hotel." I lied, but I felt that another half-jack was now definitely indicated. The nearest hotel was quite close.

"We must hurry because I'm expecting people to-night," I added.

"Oh yes, that blonde lady. I haven't seen her a long time," he said, meaning Mabel.

"No, other friends that are seeing me off," I said curtly.

We rushed to the bottle store first, and I bought another bottle and a half-jack which was unwrapped and slipped it into my hip pocket. To my surprise he also bought a half-jack, but of gin,

not brandy. In my mind I always thought of gin drinkers as sombre people, and always in a state of depression. In my experience they usually suffered from *dronk verdriet* (drunken sorrow), whenever they had a few over the mark.

We then went to the hotel, where we had a few doubles in the public bar. A few men were arguing about the war and the peace treaties. I did not join as was customary because I was again thinking of my miserable self. Bucky, usually very long-winded joined in, but when he saw me preparing to go he decided to accompany me. I wished he had stayed, as I knew that he was only extra friendly with me because he knew I had the goods.

Back in his room again, I placed the half-jack on his chest of drawers and excused myself. I had one object in view—to hide my second bottle securely next to the other under my mattress. I was pleased to see the first bottle safe and sound as I had left it. When an alcoholic drinks he always wants to be sure that his next drink is forthcoming, otherwise he becomes worried and restless immediately.

I hurried back to Bucky's room so that he could not open my half-jack before I was present. He was just opening it when I entered.

"Pour me a small one," I said. "You know some good people are visiting me to-night."

We had the drink, then I remembered the bully beef and fetched it. We polished it off and had another small drink. I noticed that his half-jack of gin was nowhere to be seen and mine was emptying rapidly.

It was getting dark and I excused myself again to go and switch my light on in case Mann turned up. I went back to Bucky's room and noticed that he was getting unsteady. His top drawer was slightly ajar, so that I caught a glimpse of his gin bottle and noticed that it was nearly empty. So he was swallowing quick ones every time I left him. I knew he was as selfish as we all are, but I thought he was a pal and would probably offer me some of his liquor when mine was flat.

Just then I heard voices. One was familiar and it come from the direction of my room so I went there straight away, leaving my nearly finished half-jack with Bucky.

"Hallo, Doc! allow me to introduce my wife," Mann was there with a suitcase in his hand.

"Pleased to meet you," I nodded to the lady.

We entered my room. Mann placed the suitcase on my bed and said that I should change now into my flannels and open-neck shirt, which was in the suitcase. I looked at them and opened the suitcase. To my astonishment I saw my clothes with other new things neatly packed. I gulped and asked why I should change.

"Because we want that shabby suit and other clothes you have on, to be cleaned and ready for you when you come back."

I felt as if my knees were bending but the brandy kept me straight.

I just answered by nodding my head, words failed me temporarily.

The lady left the room and her husband carried her chair out to the veranda.

I undressed, after placing the flannels and the shirts on the bed. Mann came in again, and said softly but kindly to me that he thought I needed a bath first. My brain quickened and my heart gave a thump, but he was so nice about it that I agreed.

I had no dressing-gown but the bathroom was near-by. I was working out how I could get a drink before I went to the bath, because I was sure I needed one. I tried to think hard but could not find an excuse and could not openly pull the bottle from under my mattress. I must be diplomatic about this. I went to the bathroom, switched on the light and opened the taps. The water ran in fairly fast, and just as fast I got an idea, and dashed back to the room. I noticed Mann was sitting on the stoep rail, chatting to his wife. I said I had forgotten the soap, and in a flash I had one bottle out from under the mattress and pushed it down my pants, holding it at the neck and walked back to the bathroom.

Happily I locked the door, opened the bottle and had a good few swallows. I whistled while I bathed, and I felt almost happy, as indeed I could with my bottle in the bathroom.

I was in the bathroom a long time. I realized that I did need a bath, and the bath also sobered me up a lot, so I had another good drink, neat, out of the bottle, wrapped it in the towel and went half dancing to my room. I quickly replaced the bottle in its place, got dressed in my flannels and shirt, and opened the door.

"Feeling much better, Doc?" Mann asked. "Thought you were washed down the drain."

I just laughed. They re-entered my room and asked me where my old suitcase was. I removed it from the wardrobe and blew the dust off.

"We'll take your dirty clothes home in it, and you can have the loan of our case for your journey."

I objected half-heartedly, but was pleased in a way, because their suitcase was of leather and mine was just cardboard, the handle was coming off, and it was badly scratched.

"We must leave you now, because the kiddies are alone at home," Mann said. "Behave yourself now, and I'll be here at 7 a.m. to-morrow morning."

"Good-night," I said, but in my heart I meant good riddance because I felt fine, as if a new night had just started.

Bucky's room was in darkness, I knocked at the door, heard him snoring inside and tried the door, but it was locked.

I swore under my breath and was annoyed because I knew he had finished my brandy and I was sure his gin also, and was out for the count.

What was I to do? The best thing would be to have another drink. It would do me no harm, and furthermore I had a good supply. I poured a drink into the only glass in the room and added water to it, feeling that I could now have a drink like a gentleman and in my own time.

Then I took a sip, after which I pulled out the other wrapped

bottle from under the mattress and packed it deep into the suitcase under all the clothing, no taking much notice of what clothes were in the suitcase. I placed the suitcase in the wardrobe and locked it for the first time.

After finishing the drink I sat on the stoep and looked at the sky. It was a beautiful evening and I could hear splendid dance music from the Railway Institute. I decided at once to walk over there and just have a look round. I locked my door, leaving the half-finished bottle of brandy on the dressing table.

When I stood in front of the Institute I thought of all the wonderful times I had in that building. How I had enjoyed the dancing; how I had played snooker in the billiard rooms, and had at one time been quite a crack player, even winning a championship. I wondered if it looked just the same inside, dared not show my face because I had not paid my last bar account, and had been virtually expelled for not doing so. But the urge grew on me.

I was neatly dressed, had a good haircut and I saw no reason why I should not just look into the place. If the doorman spotted and remembered me, well that would be just too bad. I did not want to steal anything, and I did not want any free drinks, so what could the objection be? I walked cautiously to the ballroom door first and saw a doorman there who would recognize me. I turned and walked towards the main entrance of the institute, and found that the doorman's seat was empty. Nonchalantly I walked in, and into the bar with its very long counter, but slipped out on to the veranda almost immediately as I recognized the first barman. On the veranda I sat on one of the benches in which I used to sit years ago watching a football game, and from where I watched the soldiers march the "Retreat" when General Smuts took a salute.

A waiter passed me and I took a chance and ordered a brandy and a beer. He brought it to me, and looked surprised. I thought, this must be because I had ordered two drinks. It was not five minutes afterwards that I realized what he was surprised about,

because I felt a touch on my shoulder. Looking up I saw the Manager's face. He was very stern and asked me to drink up and come with him. I did as ordered and followed him to his office. He rebuked me and warned me not to set foot in the building again. I was very annoyed but said nothing and walked out slowly, in the same manner as I came in. The doorman, who also recognized me, bade me goodnight. I was in no mood to be polite.

Minutes later I was back in my room pouring out another drink, I added water and drank it with one gulp. Then I poured another drink, put off the light and went on the veranda and sat on the step.

Peacefully I sipped and thought what insult I had to bear from a place where I use to spend about a third of my salary in earlier days. Did I deserve to be treated like this? Never. I was always a hail-fellow-well-met, and friends use to wait for me and hail me when I entered the bar. A billiard table was reserved for me every afternoon at a fixed time, a partner was always waiting, and I never failed to turn up. I was always willing to stand a few rounds of drinks, before, during and after a game. Now I was an outcast, just because I owed them a few pounds which I would gladly pay if I had them. Well, to hell with them all. I was all right as I was. It must be late; I had no idea of the time, the music was still going strong, but they would not finish until early hours of the morning. I must get some sleep, having a long journey ahead of me.

2. "APPEAR BEFORE COUNCIL"

AS I lay on my bed with the bottle well within my reach and a half glass of brandy and water on the chair next to my bed, I thought how pleased I would be to be out of this stuffy little room even if it was just for a few days. East London. Yes, I had been there before in my wanderings and I wondered if the man for whom I had done a locum, was still there.

He was away when I went to the locum, as he was in the army. I disappointed his wife by partaking of liquor. She could not trust me and had to ask for another locum. I hoped I would not bump into her or her lawyer, who had looked after her affairs while her husband was away. He was the one who told me that I was unsatisfactory and gave me one pound pocket money to go home with. That was my last locum before I took up insurance, and I knew and cared very little about my profession. I had forgotten many things, was not up to date, and couldn't care less.

It was light and the sun was shining into my room when the Native boy brought me coffee and asked to clean my shoes. I knew that those were the orders of my kind landlady.

The bottle next to my bed was empty, and I was pleased to know that I had another bottle in my suitcase. I got up quickly, unlocked the wardrobe and had the bottle out in a jiffy. I poured myself a stiff brandy and drank it neat, shuddered and felt the liquid flowing through my system, warming it.

The boy brought back my shoes and I asked him the time. He told me it was 6.30 a.m. The bathroom was occupied, but luckily I had a basin in my room. I obtained cold water, and had another drink, because I was incapable of shaving without a drink. After shaving with cold water and ordinary soap, a habit I was forced to adopt because of lack of funds, I dressed quickly in my

clothes of the night before, had another drink, and placed the bottle in the suitcase.

There was a knock on the door and there was my landlord, sober for a wonder, I thought. He invited me to a quick breakfast, which I enjoyed. Mann arrived as I was going back to my room.

Within ten minutes I was on the train with my ticket and an extra five pounds for expenses.

The train journey to East London had started, and I was in good spirits. My accommodation was booked and I had a coupé to myself, just what I needed.

I went in for breakfast after I had a good appetizer. I was in funds and was going to enjoy myself. In the dining saloon I noticed a few distinguished looking men, I had an idea that they probably were members of the Council. This called for good behaviour.

● On the way I purchased some periodicals and newspapers and stuck to my coupé most of the morning.

Before lunch I had a beer in the dining-car and sat gazing out of the windows enjoying the scenery. Had lunch and stayed a while in my compartment, then picking up some magazine, I took a seat in the dining car again, reading, looking about and having a drink now and again. After dinner that night I was in the car again having a few drinks and, remembering that my own bottle was nearly empty, I bought a bottle from the chief steward. Now well reinforced I went back to my coupé.

I had a night cap and went to bed. For some time I lay in the dark, in an expansive mood, happy to be away from Pretoria but with very uncertain feelings about the future. If things became worse I would go to that Institution and try my luck. Life is like a wheel, at one moment you are at the bottom and surely you will be on top again. I thought about the time that I had appeared before the Council some years ago about habit-forming drugs, and had come off more lightly than I had thought I would. This time I was not so sure, because I knew that I had a con-

viction for driving a car under the influence of liquor and also that I was convicted in a court of law for writing a few dud cheques, though for very small amounts.

My banking account was closed. Two small cheques I wrote out were for a very poor destitute woman, who had no food and begged me for money. I had quite a few drinks in me, and told her that if she could procure me a cheque form I would gladly give her the money to pay her butcher's account. It did not take her long to obtain the form, and I wrote out the cheque. I did it in a frame of mind of feeling a benefactor, and thought nothing of it. A few days afterward I issued her another cheque, this time for a grocery bill. The same procedure was followed, and I forgot it.

I had squared my conscience by thinking that, well, if she tendered these cheques and they were found to be of no value she would still have to pay her accounts herself. So nothing could happen to me. But it turned out that she actually asked for greater amounts than she owed and obtained change each time. She told her creditors that the cheques were good and the signature was of a professional man.

Before I realized what had happened, a detective called on me and placed me in custody. The case was heard the next day, the podgy bank manager being the main Crown witness. My defence proved futile. I pleaded that I had had no intention of defrauding anybody, that I had acted mercifully, and that I was under the influence of liquor.

The magistrate, an old friend of my family, rubbed it in good and hard. I was convicted to three months imprisonment or a £30 fine, half suspended; I had also to honour the cheques. The public prosecutor immediately contacted my relatives who came to my assistance.

I left that town in a great hurry.

These two charges, my previous appearance, and my present mode of living were viewed in a very serious light. The nearer the train approached my destination the more I realized the

seriousness of my plight. I had another drink, placed the bottle carefully next to me, so that it could not fall and fell asleep. I had a terrible nightmare that night, and remembered being wakened up by the ticket examiner, who inquired if I was quite well. He told me that I had shouted and growled like a lion. I was told the same story previously and also subsequently. I just had another drink, turned around and slept again.

The next day on the train I worried more than ever, stuck to my coupé and ordered drinks all day.

On the day following the conductor told me that we should arrive at East London early in the afternoon. I shaved and got dressed in a suit which was in the suitcase. I looked respectable enough, but my face bore the scars of heavy drinking.

In East London, after booking in at a hotel, I walked down the main street towards the Town Hall, in which I knew the Council was going to meet. Here I inquired which hall was set aside for the meeting and was told that the Council would assemble at 9 a.m. next morning.

From here I went to a bottle store, bought a half-jack, was told that the bottle stores opened at 9 a.m. in the morning, and was satisfied.

Then I had a drink in a different hotel, and returned to mine, where I noticed some of the same distinguished looking men again.

After dinner I walked about the streets and called a taxi to take me to "the Glen." I wanted to smell the sea and inhale the fresh sea air. The taxi collected me again after an hour and I went straight to my room. That night I could not sleep at all, was awake early the next day, finished my half-jack and was waiting at a bottle store at five minutes to nine. I was first in and collected my half-jack, and slipped it into my hip pocket. I had plenty of time and felt strong enough now. I remembered that Dr. Peters had told me I was to appear at 9.30 a.m.

Back in my hotel room I remembered that the hotel manager had told me the previous night that I could only have the room

for the night, I packed my suitcase and carried it downstairs. Paying the bill, I asked if I could leave my suitcase in the office for the morning. I dimly realized that my suit was full of wrinkles, as I had not hung it up the night before.

I went to the Town Hall, and located the assembly hall. At the door I met the assistant registrar who informed me that the Council was gathering, that I should be seated in the passage, and that he would call me. Instead of sitting down I went to the lavatories and had a stiff drink from my half-jack which was still in my hip pocket. As I entered the passage he was waiting for me and ushered me in. The hall was packed with men and I saw that they were very stern. I walked in as if I cared little, but my heart was in my shoes. I stood before a dais and the president looked at me, through his glasses, like a judge. With a poker-face he asked something of the registrar, who read out a long statement which I vaguely followed and thought a lot of "baloney."

"What do you plead?" the president said in a tone of voice which I thought was very sincere, mixed with feeling.

I looked at him for a moment, trying to make up my mind, also feeling sorry for him because his face had changed from that poker-face to somebody suffering from pain.

"Guilty," I said in a strong voice but not too loud.

"We will call you back in five minutes," he said.

I was ushered out by the assistant registrar who was exceedingly kind to me, then and afterwards.

I went straight to the lavatories again and had another drink, came straight back and stood at the door. A few minutes passed, and I was beckoned to enter.

I stood in the same place and heard the verdict.

"You will appear before this Council again after one year to show that you have changed your ways. Thank you."

"Thank you," I said and was out of that door in seconds, shook hands with the registrar who was genuinely sympathetic. I went back to the lavatories and finished the half-jack and left the emp-

ty bottle there in full view—for spite.

I actually ran down the steps of the Town Hall and felt pleased that it was all over. Touched at the bottle store for the usual and made my way to the hotel and from there to the station. At the station I heard to my dismay that the first train home was only on the next morning. I booked my seat and wandered back into town. Thinking where I was to find accommodation, I tried the hotels without result.

Feeling now really broken hearted I passed the taxi rank, where a driver came up to me and asked me my name. I told him. He was suddenly pleased and talkative and asked me what my trouble was.

"Your mother fed me once, son. Get into my car and I will have you fixed up," he said to my utter amazement. He took me to a boarding house in the Glen and paid my board for the night and promised to pick me up in time for my train. I thanked him warmly.

It was still early enough to get more supplies so I called another taxi and went to the nearest bottle store, after which I walked back to the Glen, quite a few miles, but I felt like walking, and the nearer I came to the sea the fresher I felt.

That night I met some friendly people and had a good sleep, to be woken early next morning for breakfast, after which I went down to the sea again and stood there for a long time, just thinking of nothing.

Returning home I found my taxi friend waiting for me. I had a quick drink, and said good-bye to the people of the house.

My homeward journey was not pleasant, I had to share a large compartment, and I was broke. Never will I forget that journey!

I lie on my top bunk and slowly get sober. I cannot control my shaking body. I go through all the hell of remorse which

every alcoholic feels, and even think with regret of the people I have harmed. I think of suicide and build a dream about how all the people who know me will be sorry when they hear of my death and how they will blame themselves for driving me to it.

Soon Johannesburg is not too far off and I begin to scheme how to get hold of a half-jack. I think of my friend who works on the railway station.

3. COMMITTED TO AN INSTITUTION

MY home-coming was a lonely affair. I strudged down towards my room with all my possessions in one suitcase, and as I walked it became heavier and heavier. At last I reached my room, sat down on the bed and thought I needed a drink badly. But I had no bottle, and began to think of schemes. It was early in the morning and there was a full hour to go before the bottle-stores opened. The more I thought of this the thirstier I became; my scheming changed to a bewilderment and I began to feel panicky. A plan must be made, and fast. I stood up, tried Bucky's door, but there was no hope. Then I started walking, came to the nearest hotel, walked in and around the back. I thought I might see the barman and ask him for a drink and promise to pay him later.

The back door to the bar was open. My heart jumped as I entered. There was no one in sight. I heard the noise of bottles being packed somewhere, it must be a servant, packing the empties into the boxes. I stood for a moment watching the beautiful bottles neatly packed on the racks and my thirst became worse. So near, and yet so far. I edged slowly down the centre until I came to the opening which leads to the racks and the till. A half bottle of brandy was standing close by, and many empty glasses. In a flash I had the bottle and a glass, poured myself a very stiff one and drank it. "How wonderful," I thought, "it has saved my life. Another quick one and then I will go." I managed it, and walked out of the bar quickly, I saw nobody and felt sure that nobody saw me. I was happy and my thirst was momentarily quenched, so why worry? It was a marvellous stroke of luck.

Getting clear of the hotel, I dug deep into my pockets and found that I still had two shillings. That would buy me a drink in a respectable way; but what of later on and the night? But

that did not really worry me—yet. I was feeling fit enough, and that was all that mattered.

In my room I went through my pockets again and could not find another penny. But I had my fountain pen in my hand, and later I raised five shillings on it. This bought me a half-jack and I felt happy. That fountain pen had cost me £5.

My next job was to let Mann and the other people know that I was back, but I had to have a stiff one first. After this it was easy; I 'phoned him, and told him that I had appeared and was suspended for a year. He promised to see me later. I was now feeling excited about going to that "Nursing Home" they spoke about, and I forgot all about the insurance business. A genuine desire now came over me to be cured. Cured of what I did not know because I was not sick, it was just hard lines that I could not find a job. I was down and out, but who cared? Nobody, and I cared less, because somehow things would rectify themselves. I had not the slightest notion how this would happen, and when it was going to happen. All I knew was that my half-jack was fast becoming empty, and what then? I would die. Die in loneliness, and be buried as an unknown pauper. One thing was sure, somebody would bury me—they have to.

Luck knocked at my door again as I sat thinking thus. It was my landlord. He asked me to buy him some booze, quite a lot of it, and gave me the money. I was to store it in my room, as his wife would not allow it in the house. I could buy myself a bottle also. I soon placed the order, and took personal delivery of my own bottle.

As soon as I was back in my room, I emptied my jack and hid my bottle.

At lunch-time my landlord came to make sure that I had ordered everything. He was satisfied and told me to look after it until he called for it. I had lunch with him, after which I went back to my room, locked the door, had a drink from my bottle and just relaxed on the bed. I felt tired and fell asleep.

I was awakened by a loud knock on the door. I was frightened and did not utter a sound. Who could it be? Then I heard voices. Bucky was one of the persons speaking.

"He must be in there, knock again," I heard a strange voice.

I raised myself softly and tiptoed to the window and peeped out. I recognized the other man as an old pal. I opened the door and apologized for the delay.

"Come inside and have a drink," I said.

Bucky seemed to be very pleased to see me back, and asked me how things had gone.

I told him "as I expected."

The other old acquaintance was the man who had made love to my ex-wife. I discovered it, but funnily enough could never believe it, because he was as ugly as you could make him. He could talk largely on various objects, but I always thought he was only talking trash, he could tell jokes without end and could sing a little.

It might have been because he was amusing that my wife fell for him. Nevertheless I did not bear him any grudge and I had plenty of drink, so I thought, "let us drink and forget our differences."

We drank and finished my bottle, with the aid of Bucky's glasses. I proudly showed them the other bottles in my wardrobe. They sat, we drank and talked about everything on earth.

We were in the midst of a real good old drinking orgy when Mann turned up. I offered him a drink, he accepted, I thought just out of politeness, but I noticed the scorn in his eyes. He ordered the other men out of the room against my will and to their great disappointment. We wanted to throw him out of the room, but changed our minds quickly when the landlord appeared and wanted to know what the din was about. He warned us that if we did not stop the infernal row he would call the police.

Bucky and the other pal walked out, cursing. The landlord asked me for one bottle of his brandy, I handed it to him with

pleasure and was relieved that he did not demand his full order.

Mann just watched the proceedings and said nothing. When we were alone he asked me for a drink, I had one with him.

"Now come with me and lock the door," he said.

"I can't," I protested, "because those two hooligans will steal my liquor."

"No, they will not, I saw them going out of the back gate a minute ago," he soothed me.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"Just for a drive, and for something to eat," he answered.

We drove out to the Fountains, but did not say a single word. He looked bitter and hurt.

"Well, Doc, to-morrow is the day that you must go to that Nursing Home," he said eventually.

The drive and fresh air sobered me up a bit and I felt that this man had some strange hold over me. I must obey him. I told him I was willing to go if he took me there. He promised.

He stopped the car in front of a neat looking café and beckoned me to follow him. He ordered two mixed grills. I enjoyed mine, even without the usual appetizer, but I was also becoming irritable and restless because I was worrying about the liquor in my room. The real reason was that I was getting thirsty again. He noticed it and drove me home in silence. What I liked about him, he did not scold me, but when he dropped me at my lodgings, he said in a friendly way:

"See you in the morning, Doc. Good-night."

"Good-night," I said, relieved, but also a little hurt.

Walking slowly I pondered about this man, he was likeable, kind and yet firm. I knew he meant every word he said. Why worry about me? I thought.

When I approached my room I noticed that Bucky's light was burning, I suddenly became afraid that they might hear me and pester me for more drink when I felt like having a few quiet drinks myself. This would probably be my last night. It was, indeed, for a long time.

Stealthily I crept to my room, and unlocked my door noiselessly. I did not switch the light on, and felt around in the darkness for a bottle. Two bottles clinked against each other! I caught my breath and stood motionless for a second.

I could hear the voices next door, they were not disturbed, nor had they the slightest notion that I was in my room. I drank six big swallows from the bottle and sat down on the bed with the bottle between my legs. Listening intently to the voices next door I could now make out three voices, Bucky's, the other pal's and the landlord's. What were they talking about? Yes, I caught that sentence it was about me, I wanted to shout at them but remained silent. I had another drink.

They were going out again, and then my door knob turned, luckily I had locked the door as I came in. Somebody kicked my door. I remained as I was. I was quite happy and contented.

The croaky voices, with shouts and threats intermingled, carried on four hours, and I was sure they had waited for me. But they had drinks there also, because I could hear the bottle-against-glass clink now and again.

I simply had one drink after another until I rolled over and slept, to be aroused by the sun shining in my face. I was not on the bed but on the floor. I reached automatically for the bottle but I knew it was empty when I touched it.

I straightened myself, stretched a little and pulled myself erect, feeling too horrible for any words. My head was thumping and my throat was as dry as sandpaper. I reached for another full bottle, opened it and had a big gulp, shuddered, and felt the pungent liquor entering my toes and back it went into my circulation.

I wanted to be sick. Another quick drink, and I was myself again. My face felt swollen and my eyes were painful. I looked in the mirror and was sorry for myself, and had another drink.

Remembering Mann's words, I got dressed in my flannels, shaved, washed, combed my hair and opened the door. I noticed that the sun was already high in the sky. Mann came and told

me that he called earlier but that I must have been out. I was out. Out for the count.

We went down town, entered the office of the man who had spoken about the nursing home, but he was not there. With someone from his office, we went to the magistrate's office. I was interrogated by a beautiful young woman. Then the magistrate came in, just looked at me once, sat down and signed a paper.

Then to the district surgeon, who examined me in a great hurry.

We went back to the office again, Mann spoke a few words to the other gentleman and told me to follow him. We went to my room and on the way there he told me that he would collect me again in the afternoon.

I was pleased for the break, and dashed into my room and had another drink. There were still a few bottles left because the landlord's order was quite a big one.

To my disappointment, the landlady came to my room with a servant and asked me for the liquor. I handed it all over bar a half-empty bottle which I told her belonged to me. She also had the empty bottles removed. She was not so smiling and friendly that day, and looked as if she could burst into tears. Why, I could not understand. . . .

I was just finishing another drink, when Mann arrived. Things were happening fast that day. He had my old suitcase in his hand. He opened it and told me to get dressed with the same reminder that I should have a bath first. I obeyed because I knew I was beaten. He packed my suitcase for me and offered me a drink out of my bottle with these words:

"Have your last drink, Doc."

I looked at him and poured myself another stiff one. He said nothing, and taking up the bottle, walked out of the room and emptied the bottle on to the ground.

Twenty minutes later I was on my way to the Nursing Home in Johannesburg, with three other men in the car, all insurance agents. I was pleased. It was a kind gesture.

An hour later we stopped in front of a grey building which resembled an old school. Over its entrance was written in black letters "Northlea."

The three men escorted me into the office, handed over my suitcase and another big carton, bade me a friendly good-bye, and left me in charge of another man, whom I took to be an official.

4.

THE INSTITUTION

THE man whom I took to be an official invited me into an office, which was also a telephone exchange. The man asked me a few questions, then called another man, whom I was told was the orderly, who in turn told me to bring my suitcase and parcel along to the Infirmary. I was momentarily impressed but my heart gave an extra thump when he pointed out my bed in a long room with twelve beds. This room was surely not an infirmary but just a dormitory, with twelve old beds with thin hard mattresses. The beds were slovenly made and the linen was not too clean. A long high locker with twelve doors, and a few dirty bedside lockers were the rest of the furniture.

On top of this large locker were a number of suitcases not neatly packed.

In the infirmary I saw a few men, one sitting on the edge of the bed just doing nothing, two lying with their shoes on the beds talking and cursing at the same time.

I just stood petrified and dismayed.

The orderly, whom I heard afterwards was a lawyer, entered again and informed me that the Chief wanted to see me.

In another neat office I encountered a short stocky-built man, with a kind determined face. He impressed me instantly, he made me feel safe. His conversation convinced me that he had great experience in dealing with my type, men who had struck rock bottom through drink. I summed him up as he was surely doing with me, and concluded that he was a firm sympathetic man, temperate and well balanced. His serious eyes bored into my soul and I knew that he was reading me like an advertisement: the finished product of alcoholic beverages.

He dismissed me kindly, adding that whenever I needed to consult him I should not hesitate. I thanked him and walked out of his office with a better understanding. The forlorn feeling, the

misery, and the stone grey environment was changed to that of safety, security, and hope.

The orderly conducted me to the dining room where I met a friendly elderly man, named Fritz, he showed me my seat at one of the twelve tables, meagrely laid for lunch. One spoon, fork and a knife at each place. The table cloths were spotlessly clean, so were the floor and the windows.

Then I was shown the billiard room, which interested me. It was well kept and a few men were playing.

That night "doctor" came round. He was not a doctor but a medical student. He inquired after my welfare and administered an intravenous injection of the "Northlea Cocktail."

I perspired terribly and fell asleep almost immediately, to wake up the next morning feeling a wreck. My body felt if it was infested by worms. I could not grasp my coffee mug, I was shaking and trembling, my legs ached and my head was bursting.

The orderly recommended a hot bath. I had it and while I was in the bath things eased a bit, but no sooner was I back in the infirmary than my condition started again. I became panicky and asked of I could not see the doctor. I was told I had to wait. Eventually I saw the doctor who called me into a very small dispensary and closed the door. There was just enough space for the two of us to stand. He poured out a very stiff brandy and offered it to me. I looked at it, just what I wanted but I dared not take it because I knew I would spill it. I was trembling more then. He saw my predicament and held it to my mouth, my lips were also trembling but I swallowed and down it went. Recovery was almost immediate. This doctor gave me an injection of vitamins and ordered me to walk about the farm for a while.

I found my way into a beautiful vegetable garden, rows and rows of tomato plants, beetroot, mealies, squash, egg fruit, etc. etc. I saw that the patients were working in the garden. Some of them looked so healthy, with bare chests and bronzed backs, and they worked with pleasure and seemed happy.

A short stout man, with a slight limp, and a short stick in his

hand came up to me. He had a defiant attitude and his face showed scars of violence. His eyes were fierce and penetrating.

"What do you want in the garden?" he demanded. "Have you passed the doctor yet?" he questioned again.

I answered him that I was just looking around as the doctor had told me to.

"Who are you?" he inquired again.

I told him who I was, and he asked me if I would like to sit down, as I was feeling very weak and he probably saw that I was buckling up. I sat down on a contour wall made of bricks, which were cemented together and whitewashed, these walls were two and a half feet high and there were many of them; it made the place look more beautiful because it looked so clean. He stood on one leg and placed his other foot on the contour next to me, patting his legs continuously with the little stick. His face looked more friendly now and he started telling me about himself. He told me he was an ex-soldier with a good pension, that he was the chief gardener and a great friend of the Super. He was remunerated for this work and he was the only person who had the right to purchase drink on the farm. He promised to put me in the tomato patch after I had passed the doctor, and said that he would show me how to grow tomatoes, how to prune them and how to get the best results.

While talking to me he took a small black note book from his shirt pocket and informed me that he wrote the names of the lazy workmen in it and showed it periodically to the Super. He explained that he and the Super usually decided if privileges should be granted or not. He also warned me that if my name appeared in his book it would be just too bad for me.

I thought that he must be a big shot on the farm and that I should keep in his good books. I also concluded that he was a bully, which proved to be right afterwards. I found out that his name was Lasset, and that he drank heavily, and that he had influence on the farm. He lived a secluded life in small house built especially for him in the gardens, familiarly called Lasset's

Kaya. With him stayed two other men: Mantel, who worked in town and returned at night, he was a good conduct inmate and was allowed extra freedom; and a deaf foreigner called, after his affliction, "Dofie." He was a sort of a stooge to Lasset and waited on his brutal self-appointed master hand and foot. He was threatened and ordered about until one day, he packed up, and placed his belongings in a wheelbarrow, presented himself at the Super's office. He was moving to the next farm, Wedge Farm, because he could stand it no longer. Lasset simply commandeered another inmate to serve on him.

The dinner gong rang while I was in Lasset's company. All the men walked briskly towards the main building. I followed. In the dining room I sat opposite to a very fair man called Bobby, and next to me sat another man who had been admitted a few days previously. He was shaking as much as I was. We had soup, which we collected ourselves at the kitchen desk which acted as servery. Every second spoonful spilled back into the plate, but we both perservered and finished our soup. I could not eat any more. This Bobby was grinning at us all the time, he reminded me of a big white pig devouring his food. He had no manners at all and made the queerest noises while eating, he sat with one leg folded under his buttocks, one arm leaning on the table and his chin nearly touched the plate. He did not actually assist my appetite.

After depositing my soup plate and cutlery at the servery, I went to the infirmary to rest, as I felt tired. A few other men entered and were speaking about the work they did and also about drink. I could make out that there was something brewing, but was not at all interesting in finding out what it was.

That afternoon I saw the visiting medical officer, who examined me and gave me a stiff dose of bromide sedative, also an injection of vitamins. He handed me a box full of vitamin tablets and ordered me to swallow two after every meal. He explained that I should be at the dispensary every afternoon at two o'clock for my injection.

I thanked him. He seemed to be very understanding and sympathetic.

That afternoon I wandered towards the other farm which was situated only across the road. I did not get very far when the orderly, Mac, caught up with me and told me to accompany him back to our lodgings. He told me in not a friendly fashion that I was not allowed to go to the Canteen on my own until I had obtained the necessary permission from the Committee. Very docile I was escorted back into the infirmary.

That night, my second night in the month of December 1947, I enjoyed a little more food. Bobby was not at the table. Then I found a seat in the Billiard room and watched the men play a few games. They played well and one could see that they knew the game—as well they might being all in the same boat as I was. Here Bobby was also playing in a foursome, I gathered that one of them was also a professional man named Rock Jones, one other was a Jack, the fourth was Mantel. I was fast beginning to know my fellow inmates, all seemed friendly enough but treated me with a kind of suspicion. A characteristic I also adopted afterwards, especially to new-comers.

A man, skin peeling from his nose and ears, came up to me and asked:

“Hallo, Doc, remember me?” I looked at him.

“Of course your face is very familiar, but I can’t remember your name,” I said.

“I am Stroh, an old patient of yours, from South-West Africa.”

Yes, I remembered him well, he was a teetotaler then, but his wife drank like a fish—gin by the bottles. She called me out a few times when hopelessly drunk or very depressed. I met her again some time afterwards in Pretoria, she was then very ill, on the steps of a hotel which I frequented very often. I said nothing to him about it but all this passed quickly through my mind.

“How long have you been here,” I asked.

“Over twelve months, but I’m leaving shortly. I saw you

talking to Lasset to-day in the tomato patch. I'm in charge there, would you like to work for me?"

"Yes, I'd like to work in that patch; it looks interesting and healthy."

"O.K. I'll arrange everything," he said, and left me.

For a few moments my mind was a blank. Here a railwayman and an ex-patient of mine actually offers me a billet. I had to pay the price for my foolishness. I wondered if my family knew where I was. What was the difference?

Later, another man approached me, and introduced himself as Grini. He was very pleasant and had an open face. He invited me to sit on a bench next to him and we spoke about our troubles. It appeared that he had a wife and six children and was committed to the institution through a misunderstanding. His mother-in-law and a doctor worked the whole thing. His wife had nothing to do with the whole beastly affair. He longed to be back at his home in the Cape, and his work. He told me he was a school teacher and had high degrees. He warned me to be careful in lending any money to the inmates, because they never repaid it. Most commonly, they bought concocted brandy from the near-by location with it. Also I must be careful that nobody stole my belongings. His friendliness overawed me, but he assured me that he was my pal. He was a good man misunderstood, I summed up. We did become very friendly and I saw a lot of him. In my opinion I blamed his wife for his troubles because she wanted her mother in their home very much against his wishes. His mother-in-law was the one who caused him to be "put away," as we called it.

The "doctor" gave me another intravenous "cocktail" that night, I slept well and was a different man the next day. I ate well and went to the garden again and was pulling up some weeds, when Lasset joined me. He was more friendly and spoke in a pleasant tone. It was a Saturday.

The next day, Sunday, was a wicked day. Half the men were gone for the weekend, those remaining had visitors. I was very

lonely and devoid of all spirit. I just walked about, sat about, tried to read something in the library, could not concentrate on anything.

During the afternoon a list was posted up setting out the inmates for the week following. I glanced over it and found my name at the bottom of the list, the heading of the list where my name appeared, was "Garden."

The men were returning from their respective visits; one arrived not very sure of himself and was hurried away to some out-building. I became interested and watched the proceedings. I was informed by a fellow inmate that the man was placed in the "cooler." I was made to understand that this man would stay there until sober. Further that he would now be moved back to the infirmary and one of us in the infirmary would get promotion and be moved to a six-decker room.

I became more curious and asked more questions, I was told that if a man behaved himself, he was transferred from a six-decker to a four-decker, then to a two-decker, from which he was usually qualified to go out to work parole. (Returning home every night for some time and then released altogether.) I was very interested and thought it would not take me long to go through all that.

After lunch, which was cold meats and salads, I for the first time thought I would look into my suitcase and carton. I opened one at a time and I was very happy. In the carton were cigarettes, a pipe, a few bags of tobacco, writing material, and even stamps. Under which were neatly packed a pair of khaki trousers, khaki shirt, long grey socks, and new pair of shoes. Hurriedly I opened my suitcase again, and the first thing I saw was a closed envelope, on which my name was written and the words, "Best of luck, Doc, from your Insurance colleagues." I opened the envelope and found two pound notes in it, which I pocketed quickly, afraid that somebody might see them. Then slowly, methodically I unpacked the contents of the suitcase on to the bed. To my utter surprise I found everything clean,

properly packed and mended. A few tears came into my eyes as I picked up the socks and saw the darning. It could only be one person who did that, and she was Mrs. Mann.

"God bless her," I thought.

I dressed up in my new pyjamas, donned my dressing gown and my slippers. There was no mirror to look into but I knew I looked smart. I went to the dispensary because I saw a light burning in it through the fan light. The door was next to that of the infirmary. I knocked on the door and "doctor" opened it. He invited me in, and I noticed that the other professional man was also there. We were introduced—it was Rock Jones, and I thought that he did not look too well. "Doctor" gave me two little red capsules and instructed me to swallow them in front of him, and go straight to bed. I knew the capsules, they were hypnotic. I swallowed them and left.

Instead of going to bed straight away, I went to the bathroom, had a hot bath, which made me feel much better. Then, after a chat with Grini, I lay on my bed for a while and fell asleep, only to be awakened the next morning for coffee.

Monday morning. I had my first shave since my arrival, with shaving soap and hot water. It was a treat. In the infirmary I made my bed, as everyone had to make his own bed, and dressed in my new khaki working clothes. Then after breakfast I went to the tools office where I was handed a hoe and a rake.

Charlie was in charge of the tools. He was an ex-lawyer, and I believe a very good one before he took to drugs. He did not like liquor, but used to buy patent medicines by the dozen and drink them.

Lasset stood near the irrigation dam and as we walked past him with tools in our hands, he ordered us where to go. He ordered me to go with Stroh; so it was arranged as I was told.

I hoed and raked between the tomato rows and enjoyed it. For the first time I really found pleasure in gardening. While I was busy I thought of nothing else and was so occupied with my new job that I did not even hear the ten o'clock coffee bell.

Near the kitchen door two large coffee urns were placed on the table and we helped ourselves to coffee. Fifteen minutes were allowed for the coffee break. Your tin mug must be kept with you, you were not allowed to go into the building.

At lunch-time I was hungry and ate well.

The afternoon I worked with zeal and felt tired at knock-off time.

After a lovely shower, I relaxed, then went over with Grini to the Canteen. It was a dry canteen and you could buy anything there, except liquor. The canteen man, Wally, was a Wedge inmate and a fine chap.

When we came back it was dinner time, and we all collected our food personally.

First the soup—there was always soup—and it was good strong soup, then upon returning your empty soup plate you were given your meal. I found the food good and wholesome. I always enjoyed myself especially the first six months when my appetite returned with a vengeance. I could not eat enough and had to buy extras from the Canteen, or help my neighbour finish his food.

I was lucky in remaining the same seat for many months, and usually the new patients were allocated a seat at my table. They usually had no appetites at all, and so I obtained the lion's share most of the time.

That night Grini called me to join him in the "Bingo" game, then I realized what the game was, which was played in the dining room every night. After watching how Grini played I bought three cards myself and won two pools making my winnings about ten shillings. I was happy and promised Grini I would play again. I played the game for months, won sometimes and lost more often, so eventually the novelty wore off and I forgot the game. Many nights afterwards I still enjoyed and smiled about the sayings of the operator. Especially, Number one, "Jan Smuts," Number two "Ouma," Number three "Oswald Pirow," Number thirteen "Lucky for some," Number six "Walk-

ing stick," Number nine "Doctor's favourite," Number thirty-two "Dirty too," Number sixty-six "Full house."

On the Friday I was told by Lasset to get all my uprooted weeds and make them easily accessible for the wheelbarrow. Also that I should start irrigating the tomatoes. The first task completed in the morning, I started irrigating the water in the afternoon, down from the dam into the already made furrows and then along the tomato rows. While standing and watching the water run, Stroh came up to me and started explaining to me how to prune the tomatoes. To keep the stem clear for about eight inches from the ground, to clip the new in-between shoot with my fingers and to thin the flowers out, leaving four to five on each little stem. I thought it quite an art and enjoyed it immensely. To this day I am a tomato-growing enthusiast.

Saturdays we were all up just after coffee, collected our clean bed linen, towels and soap. These we received in exchange of our soiled linen which was carefully checked. After making our beds the floor had to be polished and rubbed clean and shiny, because Saturdays were inspection days, and if your floor was not shining satisfactorily your privileges were curtailed. We made our beds and swept our rooms everyday, but Saturdays were special days.

In the garden I removed all my weeds myself with a wheelbarrow and at the same time did my irrigation which had to be completed by twelve noon. I finished quite leisurely and loved it. After lunch Grini came to me with a bundle of dirty washing in his arms and told me that he was going to wash his clothes, that I should do the same. I followed suit and found a few men at the wash-basins, whistling and singing.

I dumped my dirty clothes, two shirts, a few handkerchiefs and two pair of socks in a basin and started to wash them. Then I remembered my mother again. Many years ago I used to help her do washing, but never dreamed that I would one day do my own washing, especially after having had three servants in my own home; but it had to be done.

After washing I hung the articles on the line, I had no pegs,

and nobody, even the older inmates will lend you any pegs, but I quickly acquired the special way of hanging these articles. The shirts were hung right side up with a twist of the sleeves, the handkerchiefs were knotted together and received one twist over the wire, the same with the socks.

They took longer to dry but time was of little consequence, for I had a year, and Grini told me he had three. Further, we were only ironing the following afternoon, Sunday.

The washing passed away the Saturday afternoons and in the evenings there was a cinema in the hall on Wedge farm. Admission—only sixpence—was very cheap, but if you lived on a small capital it was quite a sum of money. So later I only went if a very good picture was showing, or if somebody else paid for my ticket.

Sundays were dreary days. We just sat around in the morning and in the afternoon did the ironing and everyone always had a strange forlorn hope that someone might pay him a visit. There were church services during the day, but at the beginning one did not feel like attending, because the idea of preaching annoyed us. Only after a few months of this desolate living you started yearning to hear something spiritual. I even arranged services and attended them regularly until I was privileged to have weekends off, when something else interested me.

In the afternoons everybody anxiously awaited to see the list, allocating the work for the next week, because there were always inmates slipping up who were demoted, or some were going away. Promotions and surprises were in every list. The second Sunday my name was the fifth from the bottom. Every Sunday I rose one or two, and a few times I slipped back to the bottom. Once I was the very first name, which implied I was the "Chairman of the Committee," and a month afterward I was at the bottom again, then rose slowly again until I was discharged.

That Monday morning I was wondering what my job would be because I noticed Stroh's name missing from the list. He went

away for the weekend and did not return on the Sunday night. Most of the inmates were very secretive. Lasset was standing at the dam, tapping his khaki pants with his stick, as usual, and when I approached hailed me. I walked briskly towards him, bade a good morning which he ignored and informed me that I was in charge of the tomato patch from that day. He instructed me only to collect linen tape from Charlie, and that I had to tie up the new chief shoots of the tomatoes.

He said the job was only for the charge hand and it fully occupied my time, during which I should teach the new-comers.

He gave me three new arrivals, whom I still remember to this day. One was supposed to have been a great artist and pianist. He reported to me with a hoe and a rake in his hands, asked me what he was supposed to do. I told him and he immediately pulled out a pair of white kid gloves from his trouser pockets and put them on his hands. He then started, and I could not help laughing at the very funny antics he performed with the hoe and then with the rake. I had to stop him for fear that he might injure the plants. I demonstrated to him how these articles were used, but he just gazed at me and confessed he had never worked in a garden before, and he thought that tomatoes bore their fruit underneath the ground. He could not tell the difference between a cabbage and a rhubarb plant. The kid gloves he wore so as not to soil his hands. Before he left he knew every plant and how to grow it, and even handled manure with bare hands. He was a weakling when he arrived but when he left (in my new hat which he borrowed because it fitted him—he never returned it) he was as fit as two men.

The second was a small fat chap from Cape Town who told me that he knew all about tomato growing. He was a master farmer, an engineer and something else all rolled in one. I believed little of what he had said, and instructed him to start repairing the furrows which were washed a bit deep due to the irrigation. He had a spade and used it as a support and actually slept while standing, so he was no asset to my patch.

The third was as thin as a rake. He had a spade, fork, rake and hoe in his arms.

I asked him what he was going to do with all the tools. He had a cheeky sharp face and told me to mind my own business. I thought discretion was the better part of valour, feeling a little hurt of course, seeing that I was in charge and this little squirt of a man could insult me, but nobody was forced to work and so I just ignored him.

He sought a shady spot and sat there all day, ignoring everybody and even the gongs. At knock-off time he carried back everything again, and said that he was very tired.

I realized that with these three men my own work would be doubled so I gathered a few extra tools the next day and worked harder than before. I quite enjoyed it and was rewarded because in harvest time my patch yielded an abundance of fruit, some tomato stools being over six feet tall, and some fruit weighing up to one pound in weight, singly.

One good day I was informed by our orderly that I should shift to number six, a six-decker. I was thrilled and it took me less than ten minutes to move into my new sleeping quarters.

In this room were six men of five nationalities, but we all spoke English.

Then I found out the routine of my new abode. The new-comer had to be first up after coffee, make his bed and sweep the room. This went on until the arrival of next new-comer. Friday morning, we all helped to get the room spick and span for Saturdays.

Another duty awaited me, which was taking coffee around in the mornings. I liked it because I was feeling very fit and my outlook had changed altogether. I felt like living again to serve, and to think of better days that lay ahead.

I liked it also, because now I could get an extra mug of coffee to which I was entitled only when this duty was performed. This lasted for one week. I was sorry when it was over.

Then a notice appeared that there would be a general meeting of all inmates, to elect a Committee member as one of the Com-

mittee members had partaken of liquor and was automatically removed from his esteemed position by the Management.

Then only did I learn the proper set-up of the Institution. The Management was the Superintendent and his officials, the Committee consisted of five members, elected by the inmates. This body had certain recommending powers especially as far as privileges were concerned, had to allocate the work of the inmates, to arrange sport facilities, to be responsible for the cleanliness of the institution, and to assist in maintaining discipline. The Committee elected its own chairman—a coveted position because then he was in the know of everything and his word carried weight with the Management.

At the meeting it was explained that only inmates who had been domiciled in the Institution for thirty days could vote, and those who had slipped up in the last thirty days were ineligible to stand for the committee and could not vote. The inmates without a vote were given five minutes to leave the dining room where the meeting was held.

To my great surprise I was proposed and seconded. I won the election and felt very proud. I thanked my supporters for their trust in me. It was a real victory for me and it meant a double-decker, because committee members occupied double-deckers.

The next day I moved into my new quarters. I was very happy. My room-mate was an engineer of Norwegian nationality, who spoke good English. I had seen him about but he did not work because his right fore-arm was in plaster of Paris, from a fall in the bathroom.

He told me that he was awaiting deportation to his fatherland because he was not naturalized in this country, and that he had overstepped the mark once too often whilst under the influence of liquor.

He was a crack chess player and a smoker of the finest Navy-cut tobacco I ever smoked. He taught me to play chess, and used to checkmate me in many of our first games, but later the pupil mastered his teacher. We spent many nights playing chess. I

dreamed chess, thought chess, and smoked his wonderful tobacco until he left one day very suddenly. He sent me two packets of Navy-cut tobacco after he left, and informed me that he was going "home." He was a fine little man and I still use an expression he loved while playing chess: "Quite a good move, if I may say so."

My next surprise came more quickly than I had expected. Charlie, who by this time had risen from tool supervisor to an assistant superintendent, paid me a visit in the garden. I was then tool supervisor and adviser in the garden. He informed me that "doctor" had obtained a good post in town and that I had to take over the dispensary in an honorary capacity.

My ambition was realized and I started the same night.

The institution was going to be doubled, a hospital and dispensary were being erected. They were greatly needed and the work was started with funds raised from various bodies. The inmates of both farms did the job and did it well, working long hours and being paid for it. The Super himself busied himself many times in the building and erection of the new wing.

The Super was a man who took everything in his stride, and he was an idol in my eyes. He would attend a very important meeting in town, or address influential people, do serious business in town, collect a drunkard in the street, interview relatives of inmates, lock a noisy obstreperous inmate in the "cooler," call another inmate and have a friendly chat with him, tell another about a good billet, 'phone for the police to come and investigate a theft, then go and play a friendly game of snooker, all in a day. He had emergy and stamina beyond compare. He always walked fast, drove a car at high speed, thought quickly and acted impulsively. Yet at other times he would come up to me and have a lengthy friendly intimate conversation. I always maintained that he was the right man in the right post.

He befriended me on many occasions and I in turn disappointed him, but he forgave me easily.

He was a very great man.

About this time I had trouble with Bobby, who was in my opinion, a spineless creature, a jellyfish. I cursed him more than once, and the Super did also, but in his good offices he was always kind to Bobby.

I remember well a certain day. Bobby had wealthy parents, he was the spoiled only son. He told the Super that he had a garage which was going into liquidation. At this garage was five lorries which belonged to him, and he thought it a very good gesture to offer them to the Super to do cartage for the institution, and also help at the crusher, which was started by a private company. The lorries could be driven by the inmates who would then earn money, and it would be a saving to the Association. The Super fell for it, and sent Bobby, a lawyer and five prospective drivers to go and bring the lorries to the farm. They left early in the morning, and by ten o'clock that evening we had word to say that the plan had misfired. Bobby and the men became intoxicated. Only the lawyer was sober.

They returned about midnight in the van used as a pick up, the lawyer driving, and all the others lying stone drunk in the back. Between them were pieces of broken bottle, they were in a sad state, a few had cuts in their faces, and were bleeding profusely. The whole committee was there to receive them, the "Bobby Lorry Convoy" as we called it afterwards, and we packed the lot in the cooler.

The Super was disappointed, but it seemed that he had expected something like it.

It was not long after this that Bobby wormed his way to popularity again, and he was allowed to work out. He had pen friends all over the country, and it was a hobby of his to collect photographs, which he exhibited to everybody. Eventually he fell deeply in love with one pen pal. He was divorced by this time, and he made arrangements to get married to this particular girl at some seaside town. He left one night in a great hurry and, as he was going by plane to his betrothed, he borrowed my rain-coat for the journey and I never saw it or him again.

My year of suspension from the register was drawing to a close and I became excited about it. I was granted leave to appear before the Council. It was in Johannesburg, and the Super said that he would accompany me. Before this he obtained a hundred pounds in cash for me from one of my relatives, money which was owing to me. With this money I was rigged out, and I lived like a gentleman again. The great day arrived. We appeared before the Council and I was reinstated. It was a great day for me and for the Super; who was even more splendid than usual that day, and pleaded for me.

I was smartly dressed and very healthy. Compared to my previous appearance before the Council, the contrast was as day and night. This time I was confident and self-assured. I was sober, and looked sober. The President, this time shook hands with me and expressed very kind words to me.

5.

MY COMEBACKS

WITH this behind my back and a bright future ahead of me, my feelings knew no bounds. I was again on the register. I could now start life afresh.

I was given off that weekend following my appearance before the Council and went straight to new friends, who had befriended me and had invited me out on previous occasions. I did not go to my relatives as I was an outcast, and they did not want to know my troubles. They had expressed the wish a few times directly to me that it would be better if I committed suicide. I never attempted it, as I had no inclination to die. I just lived on and now I had reached the top again.

The weekend was a very pleasant one, and I had a few brandies to celebrate my success. On Monday morning I returned fresh as a daisy at the institution.

Grini and myself now began applying for various vacancies appearing in the newspapers.

Grini was the first to go. Although his time was not finished, he was granted permission to accept a post. Poor Grini did not reach his destination sober and was back within ten days.

I also obtained an offer of work. I left for a mining town, where I was supposed to start as a locum, with the view of a partnership later on. My time at the Institution was not completed, but I was also granted leave. I arrived at my destination, was interviewed by my prospective employer, and had a drink with him.

I had no car, but he offered me one of his cars. He placed me in charge. For fourteen days things went smoothly. I had a few drinks at night. Then one night I had a few too many at a place quite a distance from my practice. I returned home late and must have a black-out or fallen asleep, because my car left the road and I found myself in a ditch. I could not get the car out

of it without the help of a lorry or tractor. Eventually I stopped a car, whose driver gave my car one look and told me that it would take hours to move it. He was a friend of my employer and he told him how he had found me. My employer was raving mad at me. He took me to the station, bade me good-bye, and paid me nothing for my fourteen days' work.

I was distressed and worried until I reached the next halt, which had an hotel near it. I jumped off the train, asked the conductor to hold it as I was coming back immediately. I rushed into the hotel. I knew the manager and told him I had had a break-down and wanted some brandy for a patient I was taking to the hospital some thirty miles away. He gave me a bottle and I signed a card. Ran for the train, the conductor shouted something, and we were off. I drank from the bottle and forgot my troubles.

I reached Johannesburg station the next morning feeling miserable. I located a friend of mine who gave me a few shillings and advised me to go back to the institution. I went back and told my pitiful story to the Super. I was in the infirmary again. Grini was also there.

The next day Grini and I sat weeding the carrot patch bewailing our misfortunes.

My next post was in Johannesburg itself. I had to assist in a large Native practice, involving visits to a main Johannesburg location and a smaller location in Germiston. The pay was good: I received three guineas a day and free board and lodging. Petrol and oil were paid for.

I had to have a car for the post, so I approached my relatives and, with kind words from the Super, who was still my best friend, I procured a car. It was a good second hand one, costing £375 cash.

This new post again gave me new life. I visited the large location in the morning and tried to do justice to the many waiting Natives by examining them properly and treating them with diligence. I soon found out that I could not do this because there

were always too many of them needing treatment. My other colleagues hurried me up, and soon it became a slap-dash affair. One examined the patient roughly, usually gave a penicillin injection, which was often not the right strength, and charged one pound. We made plenty of money but I was not happy because it was not medicine I practiced, but quackery, and I felt I was stealing money from the poor.

My employer noticed that I was unhappy and that I was having a few drinks too many at night. He tried to remedy it by raising my salary and endeavoured to cure me by Vitamins and by introducing me to a nice girl.

She was a "nice girl"—devoid of modesty, vain and emotional. She was a blonde with a beautiful face and shapely figure. I of course fell like a ton of bricks and asked her to marry me. She was hesitant, and this was my salvation. . . Nevertheless she told me a very sad story, that she was orphaned and had no home, thus with the permission of my employer she just stayed in our home, which was a bachelor's home. Life was easy, and little need be left to the imagination. She was with me wherever I went, played nurse, and many times acted wife.

My drinking did not subside but became worse. She was clever and shrewd and knew that I had been in a institution. Only afterwards did I find out that she was an old girl friend of the boss. She encouraged me to buy a partnership in the business. I told her I had no money, but I thought I could raise it from my relatives. So a visit to my people was arranged for a special weekend. She posed as my young bride, and my relatives were duly impressed, but not convinced.

On the Sunday my employer pitched up at the hotel where we were staying and demanded to speak my relatives about the few thousand pounds which would enable me to become a partner. I introduced him to the senior member of my family, who was also the executor of my late parents' will, under which I knew there was money placed in trust for me. I must have spoken to

these people about these money for I do not know how they could otherwise have known about it.

My uncle refused to give them or me one single penny, and that was that.

After this episode my employer asked my "wife" to accompany him back to our home—I could go home alone. I was annoyed, partly disappointed, and my pride was injured.

On the homeward journey I drank heavily from two bottles of brandy which I bought at the hotel before I left. Before I entered Springs I was stopped by a traffic officer and escorted into a courtyard, where I was searched for identification by a police officer. I was then examined by a district surgeon, and placed in a cell.

Next morning I was sober and allowed to proceed with the warning that I should appear in Court the next morning, Tuesday.

After freshening myself up with a good wash I went on my way, bought a half-jack in Springs, had a few drinks and arrived home with the excuse that I had had a blow out. Luckily my employer and my "wife" had taken a different route.

The next day I disappeared to Springs, leaving the practice to go to the devil. I did not care twopence. I appeared, pleading guilty, and paid a fine of thirty pounds. My license was endorsed. I was pleased because I had been afraid that I would receive a prison sentence without the option of a fine.

The next step I was encouraged to take was to sell my car, because as I was told by my lady friend that my employer intended to confiscate it because of the great expense and inconvenience, I had caused him by neglecting the practice.

I sold the car for two hundred pounds cash, and gave the poor girl one hundred as a present, because now she would not have me to support her longer.

That same night we had a good old "bust-up" and I drank heavily; to wake up in the "cooler" at the institution. My first concern was my money—I still had fifty pounds left. It was dark in the cooler and a lonely electric light shone through the single

small window, which had no panes to it but only iron bars. I knew I was in the cooler, and because of this I sobered up a bit, recounted my money and cursed everybody I knew. I had a very good idea how I landed there, as I remembered telling my employer and the girl friend how easy it was to get somebody back to the institution. This was obviously what they had done, simply by ringing the Super.

I sat on the dilapidated bed and became very thirsty, when I thought an angel rapped on the bars of the window. I looked up, saw a head, could not see the face, but recognized the voice of Snowie, the "runner" as he was called. He whispered and asked, "Doc, are you there? Have you got money? Want a bottle?"

These questions came in quick succession as if he was frightened.

"Yes, yes," I answered and handed him a five pound note.

"I'll bring your bottle and change in an hour," he said and hurried away. It was hours afterwards when he turned up and luckily it was still dark. He slipped my bottle through the bars. It had a screw top; I opened it at once and had about six big swallows.

"What about you, Snowie?" I asked.

"I'm O.K., Doc; bought myself a bottle too, I hope you don't mind. I'll give you the change to-morrow."

He was gone. I never saw him (or my change) again.

I finished the bottle and was vaguely aware of someone peeping into the cooler the next morning at about ten o'clock. I heard the words distinctly.

"He's still out for the count. Leave him in the cooler."

I was still very intoxicated, but had hopes that Snowie might turn up again.

That afternoon the Super came to see me and told me all about it, just as I had worked it out in my dim brain.

My only thought now was escape and revenge.

I was taken out of the cooler and locked up in an observation

ward in the main building. Two suitcases were put into the room with me, and were just what I wanted. I studied the room well, noticing that the inner window was not barred and that the bolt was broken. Time was the only thing to wait for. I waited until ten o'clock that night, saw the night watchman turn off the lights and disappear in the opposite direction.

I placed my large suitcase below the broken window, stood on it, dropped my other suitcase neatly outside against the wall. Standing upright under the window, I clambered out head first, fell outside on my hands, jumped up and reached for my other suitcase inside the ward. With both suitcases in my hands I slipped quickly out of the front door, which was usually locked at night only after the nightwatchman had completed his round.

Bending down I ran for the cover of the near-by trees. I sat down and breathed deeply. I was too agitated to wait so I gathered my suitcases and walked crouching all the time. It was a long walk to the main road, about five miles over rough country. I was not the least worried about being assaulted, although we were always warned about the dangers of walking about at night. I was conscious of the warning but I was escaping and must get away. Any minute the Super would be notified and would send out the pick-up to watch the main road.

I reached the main road and was exhausted. I saw the headlights of a car and dodged back behind a tree. I feared that it might be the pick-up van, or might be the Super himself, because I remembered well that he sometimes went out, after escapees himself.

Bramley was my first destination, but before I got there I noticed that a roadside café was still open. I walked into it, asked to see the proprietor, and told him that my car had broken down, and I badly needed a lift into town as I was a specialist and was needed at a nursing home.

The proprietor, a very friendly man, rushed about giving orders and informed that he would take me personally to town. I was pleased and in the same breath asked him for a drink as I

felt rotten. He obliged me with this free of charge. He deposited me on the steps of a well-known nursing home, and I dashed up the steps. As he drove off I walked out again whistling softly to myself.

Once on the pavement again I made for the station; where I made certain of the time, which was just past midnight. I stood undecided for a short while, then hailed a taxi, giving the taxi the address of my former employer and sat back contemplating my next step. By the time I had reached my destination and paid the taxi, I had decided to go to South-West Africa the very next day. I had lived happily in S.W.A. and had many friends there. I could visit here and there, with a chance of a post.

My bedroom light was still burning to my utter surprise. I tried the door leading through the surgery towards my door, it was open. I entered cautiously and heard voices coming from my bedroom. I steadied myself and heard my girl-friend speaking and also a stranger's voice. I walked into the room and saw her lying in bed with this man sitting on the edge of the bed. He was fully-clad and looked respectable. I received a friendly welcome which I did not expect. I was asked about my welfare and my plans. A bottle of brandy appeared and we had a few drinks. I was annoyed at first but the drinks removed my temper.

We sat talking for a few hours but I did not disclose my real plans. I told them I was going to have a heart to heart talk with my ex-employer the next day.

Ultimately the man left, and I was asked to lie down but refused in case I might fall asleep and be reported, even though I told them that the Super had kicked me out, and that he never wanted to see me again.

When the first morning sun rays shone through the window, I excused myself and walked through the surgery again, lifted my suitcase and disappeared through the door, caught a train to the station where I placed my suitcases in safe keeping. I had a cup of coffee and a hot pie, bought a morning paper, fully expecting to see my name in block letters for escaping. I sat in the

coffee room until five minutes to nine. I then called on the nearest bottle store, gave my old address and disappeared into the first telephone booth where I had my usual six swallows, felt better, and ready for my long trip.

Back at the station I bought a single ticket to Windhoek, with a determination never to return to the Union again. I suddenly became aware of a feeling of fear of being watched so I procured my suitcases and boarded a train for Vereeniging. From there I joined my train bound for S.-W.A. that night, armed with a few bottles for the road. At Kimberley I broke my journey because I was afraid that the train was under suspicion and that I might be arrested, so I joined the train again and broke my journey four times before I reached Windhoek. How I ever reached my destination was a mystery to me.

On reaching Windhoek I booked in at an hotel, and after fortifying myself with a few drinks started to look up old friends. I met a few. They were pleased to see me again after many years. We celebrated and had sundowners all at my friend's expenses. This was the kind of break I had dreamt of.

My money was running low in spite of all the entertainments supplied, so I had to borrow money because I explained that my banking account had not yet been transferred.

I landed in Windhoek hospital suffering from pneumonia. Actually it was acute alcoholic poisoning. My friends thought it wise that I should visit other friends further North when I recovered, but I was offered a locum, to which I proceeded instead. I worked fourteen days again, and my benefactor had to return to salvage the fragments of his practice. He paid me for the fourteen days. He was a good sort.

With more money in my pocket I arrived again in Windhoek, and during a sober period was persuaded to go North to dear old friends of mine.

I went to Otjiwarongo, breaking my journey at Usakos, the big Railway junction, to join the narrow-gauge line to the North. At Usakos where I had been well-known years before, I had quite

a number of free drinks and even begged a bottle of brandy from a certain hotel.

While waiting for my narrow gauge train, my friend to whom I was going bumped into me. He was pleased to see me and suggested another quick drink at the hotel, which was only fifty yards away. We told the driver and ticket conductor about it, and they told us that we had time enough for two drinks. We had four instead, before coming back.

When we reached our destination I was well under the influence of liquor, drinking the supplies we had, and procuring some extra on the way up. Luckily my friend's wife was there with a car to meet us.

She was a tall brunette with sharp dark eyes which perceived and understood everything at a glance. She spoke very little at first, but I knew that Jess, her name, was just summing me up. The next day Jess spoke to me seriously and reminded me that I had saved her little daughter's life, said that they thought the world of me, and that from that day she would ration my drinks and cure me of my drinking habits. I took it in good part and even cried.

I told her that at last I had met my real old friends.

She saw to it that I had one bottle of beer before breakfast, because she knew I could not eat unless I had had a drink. Another bottle of beer before lunch, and one before dinner.

Three bottles of beer were my ration and I tolerated it for a few days. But then I slipped down town one day while she was visiting, bought a bottle of brandy and hid it in the orange orchard, where she usually served my beer. Thus for the next few days I had a few quick swallows of my bottle and then the beer as it arrived. She thought I was doing very well and made up her mind that from next week it would be two bottles of beer daily and after that one bottle of beer daily. I was satisfied but not cheerful about the proposition, so I laid in some extra brandy whenever I had the chance. When the week ended during which I had one bottle of beer daily, she was very happy to see that I could do it; she

was sure of success. Little did she realize that I had other means of satisfaction.

Before her treatment ended I was called to the telephone one morning and was offered a post of fifty pounds monthly, all found. I jumped at it. She was also happy and even paid my trainfare.

This post involved a lot of travelling, sleeping at hotels every night. To be polite I had to join sundowners, which necessitated the usual eye openers in the morning.

This lasted exactly one month, and before I could do any more damage to the firm employing me, I was placed on the train bound for the Union.

I arrived in June 1949 on Johannesburg station—on my ear, drunk. I was escorted by the railway police to my old friend in Railway Headquarters. He must have phoned the institution directly because when I sobered up I recognized my surroundings, the old infirmary. There I was again back where I started.

In my dazed condition I thought of my misery but on the other hand I was amongst the same kind of people and I was safe. Around me stood a few old faces grinning at me and elbowing each other. One said, "I knew he would come back."

To blazes with them I thought, I did not come back. I was forced back. Then, and for the first time, I cursed my friend in the Railway head office for sending me back to the institution. I thought he quite liked the idea. His name was Pierre, and he was such a nice good-looking handsome fellow. I wondered why he revelled in sending me to the "foreign legion" as the institution was commonly known amongst older inmates.

He must have some reason. At first I thought it was because he was in love or in touch with my ex-lady love, because I introduced her once, telling him we were going to get married. She looked beautiful that day and I knew he had an eye for a beautiful woman. He also had a very gentlemanly way with them. Also I recollected that she or he told me that they met

each other afterwards fairly often. I became convinced that this was his motive for "putting me away." Only in after years, however, did I discover that she had defrauded him, and that he was one of the most genuine friends.

That day I did not walk about, just stayed on my bed, and when I heard the Super's voice closed my eyes as if I was asleep, to hear him say: "Oh, is he back again?"

The next day I was informed that my presence was needed in the office. I knew I was in for a big row. Instead of that I was informed that I would be released on parole to my sister's home. I was dumbfounded because that was the first time that my family had shown any desire to do something for me. Yet it was true that my sister had telephoned and asked that I should board with her on condition that I behaved.

This was a shock because she had wished me dead a few times. Now this sudden change of attitude, did it forbode bad happenings, or were they going to poison me?

No! I thought, they probably had good intentions. So I went and stayed with her. I used to clean her garden, paint around the house and did odd jobs for her to be paid with cigarettes and bioscope tickets. I was quite happy because my retired father also stayed with us and he drank stout regularly. So I helped him, sometimes with his knowledge, often without. He had a bad memory and used to order stout more often than before. It suited me admirably.

During my stay at my sister's, I applied for a post in a Protectorate. I was successful. My sister was kind enough to rig me out in some new clothes and sent me on my way.

This new post was far in the country, it was a real "Pampoenfontein," with a lonely station, a small hotel, a few houses, a few tin shanty stores, plenty of trees and grasslands.

The practice was a Temporary Government one, mostly Native work and much travelling into rough country.

It was enjoyable, and I liked it. I was usually well supplied

with alcoholic beverages. My Native driver liked his new boss very much, and helped himself to my liquor occasionally, with the consequence that both of us were caught one day unexpectedly by a Government patrol, very nicely thankyou, and far off the beaten track. The result was obvious although slow in coming.

I was curtly notified after one month's service that my duties were redundant. I received my monthly salary, changed it at the hotel bar counter, paid half my debt, and told the proprietor that I was transferred to another part and would settle the rest of my debt later.

It was a long journey back home. On the way I broke my journey and stayed three days at an hotel. I was sick in my room for that period. I was very sick in mind because I could not decide where to go. The choice was my sister's home or the institution.

In desperation I left that hotel without paying my debt, although I had the money, but it was very early when I left and I just did not remember why I did not pay. I was traced later, and had to pay the hotel bill, plus a fine. The magistrate cautioned me in camera. He must have thought that I acted strangely.

I arrived back in Johannesburg during the day and I felt fine, having had a few drinks in the dining car before I alighted from the train. My first call was to place my suitcases in safe keeping. Then to the station bar to have a drink, thereafter to the nearest bottle store for a half-jack. Satisfied I just walked about until I was tired. I landed at the station and found myself in the bar.

Here I met two ex-institution hoys. They were pleased to see me, because I was properly dressed and they thought I had money, I presumed. I stood them a few drinks, paying all the time. Then I thought that I should make a break because their company was fast becoming irksome. I told them I had to board a certain train. I produced my luggage tickets and one of them said that he would collect it for me. He was off with the tickets, shortly afterwards the other made an excuse to see where the

other was. They did not return and I became worried, went to the cloakroom and asked the attendant if he had seen my suitcases taken away. I became panicky, ran to the bar, to the platforms, to the lavatories, but they were gone. I reported the matter to the Railway Police, who offered me assistance, but it was in vain.

There I was without my suitcases, and to tell anybody that they were stolen was useless, because nobody would believe me. Everyone would accuse me of selling my things for drink.

I went straight to Pierre's office and related my sad story, he believed me, accompanied me to the Railway Police again, and instructed them to hunt for my suitcases. Well I never retrieved them. Pierre was worried and I noticed that he was definitely very perplexed. He convinced me that it would be better to go to the institution again.

I went back, arriving fairly sober and told the Super my troubles. He sat silent for a while and said eventually:

"You must now sign for three years committal."

There was no way out. I agreed and settled down in the infirmary with the resolution to make the best of it. I meant it and behaved myself.

I worked hard in the garden and even became toolmaster again, and assisted the medical officer with little things. The Super took great interest in me and allowed me to investigate certain cases where families were neglected by drunken husbands. He gave me his car to do it with. A number of times I accompanied him to distant towns to persuade husband and wife to reunite. We followed up the progress of discharged inmates, assisted them in their battle of rehabilitation. This was interesting work and gave me a sense of security.

Christmas and New Year passed. They were happy sober days.

By this time I was already in a double decker and was doing special clerical work for the Super, who entrusted me to draw up graphs, showing the admissions, discharges, recommitments, failu-

res, successes and contact lost of the inmates since the inception of the institution in 1943. Further I drew up graphs showing the religious groups, educational groups, and marital state groups. It all proved very interesting, and very important statistics came to light. It showed very interesting factors, an outstanding one was that the institution had over forty per cent cures. Further that the married man over the age of forty with matriculation education was more liable to become an alcoholic. Above all it showed that the ex-volunteer was the most frequent victim of the alcoholic menace.

These statistics were so interesting that they occupied me for many days and late into the evenings.

During this time the hospitals were advertising widely for medical officers. I applied to many hospitals and was fortunate to be offered a post, on six months probation. That was my red letter day. The telegram arrived during the morning. The Super was at head office in the centre of the town, so I presented it to the Assistant Super, who could not give me a definite answer and instructed me to wait. The Super arrived, I was so excited I could hardly speak. He just looked at me, I pleaded with him to let me go even if my time was not up because it would mean the beginning of my life.

"You can go, I am sure it will be all right this time," he said, adding "I want to give you a present before you leave."

"Can I use the phone, Sir, to inform the Medical Superintendent that I will start on Monday the 6th of March 1950?"

"Go ahead," he smiled, I could have hugged him.

I made all arrangements to commence my duties on the 6th of March, but I had very few clothes, just one suit, which I acquired while at the institution, a pair of flannels and a sports coat. I was not worried about clothes.

Before I left, I went for my present. It consisted of a cheque for eighteen pounds which I was paid short while I worked in the Protectorate, a ten pound note as a personal gift from the Super,

and an empty brandy bottle, the very one I was given by Snowie when I was in the cooler. The Super had saved the bottle for me. I was embarrassed, happy and heart-broken, so that I wanted to cry. The Super saw this, and walked to the door, shouting to one of the clerks.

"Come, take Doc to the station in my car."

I left Northlea, never to go back as an inmate again.

6. LOVE ENTERS MY LIFE

WHEN I arrived at the station I learned that I had plenty of time. So I went for a drink at the Station bar—my last drink in that particular place.

From there I strolled down town with the intention to go to a café bioscope, on my way I met a pleasant blond girl, whom I had met in the Protectorate, when I worked there. She was a goodlooker and a divorcee. I invited her for tea and we chatted a long while.

She knew my story; I told her about my new billet and of my future plans. She worked for a very big business concern and periodically she visited the town I was going to.

She promised to look up me. Her name was Lucy and I fell head over heels in love with her.

I arrived at my destination during the night, booked in at an hotel and had a few drinks, but I was careful. The next day I went to the hospital very early and walked about it and the grounds for a few hours before the Medical Superintendent arrived. I reported to him, he was very friendly and showed me around the hospital, gave me a white coat and instructed me to start.

I felt very strange but met pleasant sisters and nurses, who came to see what I looked like purely for curiosity's sake. The day was long and I became very thirsty. At knock-off time I walked quickly back to the hotel and had a good old double brandy. I had to look for other accommodation as my hotel manager warned me that I could only have the room for one day. I was quickly installed at another hotel, where I had to take a double room. Here I stayed for a month.

During the first month I found my feet and knew my job, everything came back to me unbelievably naturally. Lucy paid me one visit that month, encouraging me to go straight

and not to make friends with just anybody. After this I wrote to her regularly and she answered me regularly. In the letters we fixed a date of marriage. It was to be the 15th September 1950.

My stay at the hotel was made unpleasant because when overcrowded the manager would invariably push somebody else in my double room. I procured a room near the hospital and was more comfortable and happy. It was an outside room but it was comfortable and it kept me away from the town and its hotels.

I met a few nice sisters in the hospital, but there was one that attracted me because she was so efficient but kind. She was determined to hand over certain work to me, namely booking of surgical operations in the theatres. She maintained that I could handle the doctors more satisfactorily. This task really gave me worries and drew me into unnecessary quarrels, but I persisted and within a short while the scheme worked smoothly.

I was also in charge of the Casualty Department and on occasions I had to use the theatre, when I preferred that this sister should take the table because I felt more confident if she was present. She had many years of theatre experience and rendered invaluable service to the hospital, assisting many a young doctor to perform an operation.

One day, it was a Sunday and I was on duty. This sister, her name was Askill, was also about the theatres arranging for an emergency operation. I was idle and sat drowsing in an armchair in the doctor's dressing room. She entered the room and grumbled about something I said.

"Sister, it's high time you got married and settled."

"All you men are the same, just brutes," she rejoined and walked away, obviously very upset.

On another occasion I remarked about the beautiful curtains in the doctor's room, when she told me she had selected them herself.

"Well, you have wonderful taste, they are just the right curtains for a home."

She blushed and with short steps disappeared into her duty room.

She was short, stocky and had very small feet. She seldom smiled on duty and her veil covered her hair completely. Only when she changed her theatre caps did I notice that she had dark brown hair. At the operation table I noticed that she had very small dextrous hands; here she actually showed one how to do the operation.

With my first pay at the end of March I travelled through to pay Lucy a visit. Just before leaving the Hospital Sister Askeff invited me to a party on the first of April, but I informed her that I was going to Lucy and if I come back early I would surely be at the party. As a matter of fact I felt like being at both places.

On reaching Randfontein by train where Lucy stayed, I took a taxi straight to her home. She was not in. Somebody answered my knock and told me she was out for the weekend. This infuriated me. I called another taxi and went to a few hotels to look for accommodation, with no luck. After having a few double brandies I inquired from a taxi driver what it would cost to take me home. Agreeing on the fare, we departed from Randfontein, after another drink. We had not travelled five miles when we encountered donkeys on the road. The driver swerved and hit a small donkey, which died as we pulled him out from under the car. The radiator was leaking but we managed to get back to the nearest hotel, had a drink, and another taxi driver agreed to take me. Another few spots, and we were on our way.

On reaching my town, I directed the driver to the Nurses' Home, where the party was still on. I was welcomed like a long lost friend. I paid him off and joined the party. There were only a few left because it was fairly late.

I sat next to Sister Askeff with a bottle of beer in one hand and a glass in the other.

I asked her if her boy friend was present. She said she had no boy friend. Thereupon I asked her to marry me. She looked at

me with astonishment and after a long thought, said that she would.

Lifting the glass of beer I asked the others to toast our betrothal. They were dumbfounded.

An hour afterwards I left for home, taking a bottle of beer with me and bade my future wife a casual goodnight.

Back in my room I thought what a lucky man I was, and was fast asleep in a very short time.

The next morning, a Sunday morning, I rang Sister Askeff to ask if I could come down to the Nurses Home for tea. She told me very frankly that she was not holding me to the promises of the previous night. I finished my bottle of beer, went to the Nurses Home, had tea with her and invited her out for lunch at the club. She consented. We spent a long time over lunch, after which I took her to an oaktree under which I asked her again to marry me. She consented and I kissed her. A completely new life had begun for me.

I saw Euna every day and worked with her occasionally in the theatre. Every night I had a sundowner with her either in her quarters or at a hotel.

My arrangement with Lucy fell away completely. She met my future wife and the two were very friendly.

My work now became more interesting and I worked more conscientiously, staying at the hospital longer than my usual working hours, and doing everything to please everybody. Harmony and proper organization followed with it. I became more experienced in hospital work, which I had decided to follow.

My salary was small and I knew I could not get married on it, but I thought if we both worked we would manage somehow.

Euna was fast becoming dissatisfied with her post and I knew she wanted to give it up. She spoke to me about it and told me that if we married she would be paid out double her pension, which would be a tidy sum of money. We could start on it. I agreed and we decided to get married in June from her sister's home in Lichtenburg.

She had some money and helped in buying me a few suits and other clothing. We bought a bedroom suite and hired a room near the hospital.

A special licence was obtained and we left for Lichtenburg to get married. Her people were very dissatisfied with her choice and her sudden desire to marry. I did not play the game and arrived under the influence at Lichtenburg and was not quite sober when we married in the church. I only sobered up when we left. Her relatives and friends had a poor opinion of me. I did not care at all, as I knew she loved me.

Back in our home town I worked hard and when my probation was over, I was appointed to the permanent staff.

I still drank, plenty of beer, and brandy in between. She always saw to it that I had a good supply and never reprimanded me about my drinking habits. Our capital was running low, but I did not care as long as everything was going fine. I had no worries as long as I had enough to drink.

Luck was with us. I was appointed as a Superintendent at a small hospital with double the salary I was earning. This new town was called Bentley. I knew the town vaguely because I was born in that part of the Transvaal. The chief of the hospital congratulated me, other doctors again discouraged me, by saying I was going to a one horse town. I did not care; I only knew that it was an important promotion from my present post and that it carried better salary.

I could not be released for the next six weeks to take up my new appointment, and during this time we made our plans, bought extra furniture on the Hire Purchase system, and had it forwarded to Bentley.

Although we had something to look forward to, I was still imbibing freely, but luckily this did not interfere with my work. I promised Euna that when we settled in Bentley I would not enter a bar, and that I would just drink beer at home. I made many promises which I fear, I never kept.

During our last days in this town where I had started a new

life, I still made many excuses to obtain quick drinks like brandy, in between ordinary drinks. When we visited the cinema I usually made an excuse to visit the hotel before entering just to have a few quick doubles. During the show it would be the same, especially when it come near ten o'clock, because I knew that the bars would be closing. Many times I did not like the picture or did not like the people sitting around me. I would then either talk aloud, insultingly sometimes, or doze off, but I never slept before ten o'clock. If things became intolerable Euna would try to pacify me or advise me that we should leave. This I usually favoured because then I would take Euna to the hotel lounge for a drink and then excuse myself at intervals. Wherever she reprimanded me for staying too long, I would sulk and tell her that I met so and so, an old friend or somebody important, and I could not just tear myself away, it would be very discourteous. Through all this Euna said very little in the way of reproach.

My Sunday off duty must have been horrible to her because I usually refused to have lunch unless at an hotel where I could order a few double brandies.

We were very excited when the time arrived that we should leave for Bentley. I had quite a lot of debts, especially a large one at the bottle store. We made arrangements with the creditors to forward the accounts.

Arriving at Bentley we found that accommodation was a difficult problem. We had our furniture stored and found temporary lodgings in an hotel. The room was a single one, two beds were pushed in, our clothes remained in our suitcases. Rex, our Doberman-pinscher dog, was also with us.

Our room was too small so we sought space on the hotel veranda and lounge. I was still on leave, which I had applied for, in view of our transfer, and it was between Christmas and New Year. We met a member of new people and had quite a busy time. I was in my element, and drank quite freely, visiting the bar often and signing cards to my heart's delight. All my wonderful promises to Euna were soon forgotten, but she said noth-

ing. I thought she understood and was feeling unhappy because of our environment, more than because of my drinking.

I commenced duties at the right date and time, but found quickly that I was resented by the staff, the medical men and the Board because I was the first Medical Superintendent to be appointed. Even the matron took special leave for a year to be away. Perhaps this was co-incidental.

My disappointment was great. There was no office for me, not even a white coat to wear. This necessarily called for reorganization and rearrangements which caused dissatisfaction amongst my staff.

I moved the doctors from their dressing room to another room, and commandeered their room as my office. I brought method to the staff's duties, and had the hospital under full control within a few months. My biggest obstacle was the Board, who continually referred to the Matron and always questioned my authority to change things. The Board members challenged me on many occasions but eventually I proved myself, harmony was restored and when I left I received flourishing testimonials from influential members of the Board and staff.

During all this discontent and my reorganization I drank heavily, which of course did not help matters. This was obvious to many in Bentley, and Euna was also losing heart, but I thundered along, and thought, make or break I will force my way.

Life at the Hotel proved every expensive and inconvenient. We moved into a house after a few months, and settled down to proper domestic life for the first time in our married life. Euna did not prove to be a great cook because of her many years as a theatre sister, but with the aid of books, neighbours and servants she soon became an expert.

Now I had four bottle-store accounts. One old, one from the other town, one at a local wholesaler, and one at a retail business. On any one month I could not square these accounts, and just paid off a certain amount every month. My credit was good and I was not worried. Euna was sympathetic when she heard of my

quarrels and disappointments at the hospital. She gave me very sound advice which I followed and usually found that it worked.

On the day we moved into our home I was incapable of helping Euna arrange the furniture or to hang the curtains. I just rested on the sofa, and told her I was too tired to do anything, also that I had a headache. I was tired due to an extra celebration at the hotel.

After this I developed a new habit. I stayed at the hospital for lunch and in the afternoons went down town first before returning home, because I usually visited an hotel bar to have my doubles—not the old one where I stayed before as they demanded the money I owed them. On reaching home Euna always had my beer ready, which I imbibed until dinner, and again after dinner. I usually retired with two bottles of beer standing next to my bed. This served me during the night.

During weekends I drank more than before and was usually indisposed, but on duty, for a few days, only recovering properly on Thursday to start again. So the vicious circle continued until my periods of indisposition became longer and I started getting complete "black outs." I could not remember the proper date, could not recollect what happened the day before. I did things that I could not account for, only to be told by somebody else, and then I would not believe it.

I remember Euna telling me that I slept in Rex's kennel one night and that she could not extricate me. I still wonder how I ever got into the kennel because the opening was very small.

Also that on one occasion I jumped through a very high window, climbed through a barbed wire fence, and seated myself behind a steering wheel of an old car in a motor-car scrap yard. How I got there she did not know, and how I found myself in bed soon afterwards, not soiling or tearing my pyjamas, was a miracle.

✓ She was frantic on these two occasions and wanted to cry for help but she dared not because of the disgrace attached to it. She

knew that a story like this would spread like wildfire in a small town.

This could not last and I became really very ill and a doctor had to be called in. This doctor, who became a very true friend, had also been a heavy drinker in earlier days. He examined me and knowing my ailment only too well gave me a certificate that cleared me.

This certificate caused a bit of an uproar because his partner was on the hospital Board and also knew the truth. He sided with him to the annoyance of the other Board members. It was a matter of professional secrecy which I never forgot, and swore to emulate.

During my illness a senior hospital official was supposed to visit my hospital. Luckily he also became ill and could not visit the hospital on the appointed date; but to make sure that if he came he would not see me, Euna and the secretary of the hospital, who proved to be a great friend, smuggled me away to my sister's home for a few days.

My sister was very indignant and told Euna that it was high time she realized that I was incurable, and that she should let me go to the gutter where I belonged. Euna told her that it was the fault of my relatives that I was going to the gutter because they assisted me with money and placed a bottle of brandy in my other hand and just hoped that I should exterminate myself.

On arriving back at Bentley, Euna called in our doctor friend and had a long talk to him. He knew a way to cure me. It was through using "Antabuse" tablets. They decided that they were going to put me through the treatment. I had to sign for the treatment. I signed twice because my first signature was illegible. They started the treatment by giving me double doses at four-hourly intervals. It was a kill or cure treatment. Euna stayed with me and nursed me, a few times she had to call the doctor during the night, because I became pulseless or stopped breathing. He always came in a hurry and treated me, saving my life. Rex and a queer spirit that Euna believed to be

in our home, comforted her. She asked nobody else for assistance.

The Antabuse-Alcoholic test was carried out on the 13th May 1951. That day, when I was saturated with antabuse, Euna gave me a glass of beer to drink. I became very ill, my face became hot, with my head throbbing and my heart jumping and I became quite breathless. Then I vomited and felt better. Euna urged me to have another drink, it did not have the same after-effects. I was exhausted and she assisted me to my bed. That night she called the doctor again because I was pulseless.

He injected and resuscitated me. The next day I was too weak to go back to work, but on the 15th May 1951 I started again, and since that day I have never had a drink. Life then really started afresh, and I felt reborn. I continued with the antabuse tablets for many months afterwards, taking only one tablet daily and only if Euna gave it to me. I did not trust myself to complete the treatment.

This experience I advocated later and always made the next of kin to an alcoholic pledge to administer the antabuse tablet and never to leave it to the person concerned because of that untrustworthy characteristic.

7. I REALIZE I AM AN ALCOHOLIC

MY work became a pleasure to me; I lived for service to mankind. My duties were performed with exactitude. I entered a new atmosphere and found my staff and colleagues not wanting in whole-hearted support.

Euna also was different, she seemed to be happier and never spoke of the past. We held no direct post-mortem, and whenever we spoke of the past she always referred to that time when "Roger the Lodger" stayed with us. We had many a laugh and joked about many of my pranks and excuses to obtain drinks.

I found that my salary was quite big enough to live on and even to buy extras. My "brewery shares" were paying handsome dividends and slowly but surely we paid off all our outstanding debts, and acquired new articles for our home, such as a new refrigerator, a new wireless, and a motor-car.

With all this new prosperity and happiness, came the awful feeling to myself that being off the strong drink I would never be able to enjoy company or go out to parties again. I thought it was a terrible catastrophe and that that intimate fellowship which I enjoyed so much was now doomed for always. This was a serious woe to me, and in my own mind I pondered whether it was really worth while to give up drink. . . . I had lost all my fine old pals. . . . I was going to miss that bar and billiard room companionship, all the jokes and laughter that went with it. . . . I would be shunned by the kind of people I had always liked. . . . This all made me long to get back to my bottle of beer and a pleasant smoke afterwards. The idea of being "dry" worried me. I wondered if anybody would visit us. Others would inevitable say that I was a spoilsport, a teetotaler, that I would rust if I drank cold soft drinks. Many would say I was a child and could not stand my liquor. I thought that I had disgraced

myself when drinking, but the matter was now worse. I would be belittled and called an alcoholic snob.

Euna could read me like a book and noticed my strange behaviour brought about by my puzzling thoughts. She always had my cold soft drinks ready when I entered the home from work. Her drink, brandy, was always on the tray. She usually asked me to pour out her drink, which I did and a few times I wished it was mine, but on a few occasions the smell of it made me sick. This was the prolonged antabuse therapy, which eventually eradicated my craving for drink completely.

When Euna saw that my perplexity was disappearing, she phoned old friends and invited them over to us for sundowners and parties. She would order the same amount of liquor as formerly, with a good supply of soft drinks. She officiated and never asked me in front of the guests what I wanted to drink. She just handed it to me. Slowly and very tactfully she would turn the conversation to alcoholism, telling the guests that I had stopped drinking. Many congratulated me, a few pitied me and said it was cruel to drink in my presence. Nevertheless it worked. We were invited out and our hosts and hostesses were warned beforehand by Euna to have soft drinks for me. My hosts reacted marvellously and treated me with respect. They never asked me what I was going to have, just handed it to me. This gave me more courage and determination and within a short time I was an established teetotaler. The effort was difficult but the result was glorious.

We were also invited to people afterwards without Euna's usual warning, then it was up to me to use my initiative. I overcame this by asking my host if he would mind if I helped myself, and this I was never refused. It happened sometimes that my host had already poured my drink, usually something strong. Then and then alone I informed him that I did not take any liquor. Whenever my host urged me to drink something I did not want, I refused point blank and informed him that we were leaving. Such hosts are not friends but enemies. I always

maintained that a guest should be allowed to name his particular liquor.

It happened once or twice that our hosts gave me a soft drink with something in it, because they thought that Euna had me under the thumb and would not allow me to drink. If I suspected that my host was this type, I used to take a small sip of the drink and then sit back a while. If my face warmed up slightly I knew at once that the drink was "doctored" and refused to finish it or I pushed it over to Euna to pour it out. These hosts we avoided afterwards.

A number of influential members of the community became interested in me, and after hearing that I had been to an institution begged me to give lectures on the subject. I remembered very well my first lecture, which was to the Vroue Landbou Unie. The ladies were very interested and asked me many questions. They had evidently never heard of these institutions. A few came to see me privately and solicited my assistance. I referred them to our doctor friend; he had saved my life.

One lecture followed another and I became quite popular. I had copies of the graphs I had completed while in the institution and demonstrated them at all the lectures.

During this time the Minister of Health, the late Dr. Karl Bremer, called the first National Conference on "The Institutional Treatment of Alcoholics." The minister incidentally knew me as a patient at the institution and also as a medical practitioner. He was the President of the Council which tried me.

While preparing my paper for the conference I also applied for a billet at a larger hospital but with the same salary, as I was confident that I could manage a larger organization.

The conference was held during November 1951 in Pretoria. Euna accompanied me. We enjoyed it thoroughly. I also met Mrs. Marty Mann, a great woman and an authority on the treatment of Alcoholism. She expounded the true cause of alcoholism and maintained that it was an illness, not a sin as the churches thought it to be. Her speech, lectures and films were convinc-

ing. The speeches by others were very enlightening. There I heard for the first time about "Alcoholics Anonymous." This I found very interesting, but my view then was that if Alcoholism was an illness it was purely a medical problem. Only afterwards did I come to the conclusion that it is a medical, psychological, and moral entity, that it is a very complex affliction and that an alcoholic needs not only the medical mind but also others to help him in his serious plight.

There were other speakers at the Conference—ex-institutional ones, so-called "cured" alcoholics—but they spoilt a very splendid effort by the Government to tackle this problem. Their short speeches were full of bragging and contempt. They praised one institution and damned the other. They confided that they had the blueprint of treatment for alcoholism. Their participation in the proceedings caused minor upsets and hard words were spoken. The conference was doomed a failure if these people were to gain control of it. Luckily there were other people present who sensed shipwreck and realized that these so-called "cured" alcoholics were just out to blow their own trumpet. These other sensible people turned the tables completely and it was decided to form a National Committee for the Treatment of Alcoholism. This committee was duly formed and has worked quietly and has born its fruits. Various subcommittees have been founded in many centres of the Union since the conference. And the movement is growing fast.

The conference had a a profound effect on me, as also had the influence of that great woman from America. I realized that I was an alcoholic and could not stand the minutest quantity of alcohol in any form.

I started to study the disease called alcoholism from books, periodicals, and papers by authorities. I became convinced that alcoholism was a disease of an intricate nature, scarcely understood by the lay public, held in apathy by the medical man because of ignorance in treating it.

The medical man was essentially a good family adviser, a

business man and proud of his dignity, he did not want to tramp on his client's toes.

In addition, the drinking alcoholic is usually a patient who cannot be relied on and is commonly out of pocket.

My mind was made up. Fate had saved me for something greater, which was to help the alcoholics. I knew if I helped one, his whole life and outlook would change and he would help another, and so the yeast would spread and the tragic problem would to some degree be alleviated. I knew that it was impossible to obliterate it completely.

8. MY AMBITION FULFILLED

AFTER my transfer to a bigger hospital at Vaaldorp, a growing mining town, I had more accommodation troubles and again experienced resentment from my new hospital board, because I was not their nominated candidate. These were small worries and they solved themselves.

After a good study of my new surroundings I approached the Mayor of the town with a proposal to call a public meeting of all those people interested in the treatment of alcoholism. I coached him from the minutes of the National Conference, from proper information which would enable him to make a good explanatory speech. He agreed and called a meeting.

The meeting was well attended, by people of many different walks of life. The mayor ably addressed the meeting—I was sure these were the first words he ever had spoken about alcoholism—and outlined the aims of a committee to be formed. Afterwards I gave a lecture on the treatment and arrestation of alcoholism. It was well received and the press gave it their support. A committee was elected and the machinery started rolling.

I was inundated with requests for assistance, gave much advice, and admitted my first patient to hospital.

The first patient was seventy years old, and had the same surname as the doctor who cured me, which I thought rather a peculiar co-incidence. I treated him medically but did not apply the test; he gave up his drinking habits. I was sure of success. A promising beginning.

My second patient followed soon after. He was down and out, a good for nothing. Medical men and others warned me that this patient was useless and a rogue. I spoke to him very frankly and repeated what I was told. He very glibly told me that he was continually persecuted by his own relatives and friends, and by the public in general. He promised me that he

would give the treatment a fair trial. I treated him with special diligence and put him through the test at which I had a special sister as well as another medical man to assist me.

He took the test badly and was very ill for a few days afterwards. On discharge he again promised me not to drink again. I believed him but his loquacity hindered me. He stayed off drink for six months and I heard reports that he was worse than ever, but during that six months I was very occupied in assisting others so I paid little heed to the stories.

The third person was a very well-educated man and had worked for a large company for thirty years. The drink caught him and he became a habitual drunkard. He lost his billet and came to me for help. I admitted him to hospital and treated him for ten days, I could not put him through the test because he had developed certain complications to his vital organs, but when he left he was reassured, full of courage and a new man.

He was reinstated in his former employment and made good, but the unforeseen happened and he died a natural death a few months afterwards.

During that time I was approached by a wealthy farmer's wife and relatives. They wanted the farmer to go off drinking because his farming interests were neglected and his health was deteriorating. I met the farmer socially and later privately suggested treatment to him. He promised but postponed it time and again. He always had an excuse. It was very dry and he had to attend to his dairy cows personally; or the rain had just started and he had to plough, or he had just ploughed and had to sow, or he would start the treatment after the harvest. These excuses were of no consequence because he just did nothing. He became a loafer, and would visit the near-by town every day, frequent every bar, sit and drink, talking to fair-weather friends about droughts and his difficulties. And all bar friends are "fair-weather" friends. Frequently he had nobody to talk to and would sit in the bar lounge and read cow-boy stories. He would go to town early in the morning and return to the farm late at

night, usually well under the influence of liquor. He paid very little interest to his family, scolded his wife and children, who gradually developed hatred and fear towards him. He became slovenly in his attire, and had little respect for himself or others.

I visited him frequently on his farm and tried to be friendly with him, but he was always off-hand and obstinate. I was pleased when my visits came to an end. This came suddenly, and one event followed the other in quick succession. He was arrested for driving under the influence of liquor, his family were in a frenzy, because he had a previous conviction, and they wondered what was going to happen to him. His family were very respected and also wealthy people. The disgrace of a prison sentence was too much to bear.

I pleaded at court for him, and he received a light sentence, of which part was suspended. He then promised that he would undergo treatment, but again he had his own specifications and conditions. He would submit himself to treatment in the new year. He would stop drinking and use his own willpower. He said he had to rectify certain obligations first.

The next thing was that he just drank more heavily, using drugs at the same time.

Within a matter of weeks his wife telephoned me and begged me for help. I contacted the institution and took him there.

The institution kept him sober for the month that he was an inmate there, but that was all. When he returned home he drank more heavily than before. He did not frequent the town as much as before, but ordered a case of liquor at a time. He would lock himself in a room and just drink until the case was exhausted. This he did once too often and an unnatural stuporous death was the end.

Another early patient was a hairdresser, who was down and out, on parole from a work-colony, and was doing odd jobs about Vaaldorp. He was persuaded to see me. He was reluctant, but had to because nobody required his services, he was drink-

ing, and his parole was nearly over. He collected enough courage after making a final round of all the bars and I put him through the treatment and the test. After which he was obsessed by a religious complex. He was again employed by a former benefactor, but he made such a mess of the haircuts, that he was on the streets again in a very short while.

He became very despondent and suffered from melancholia. He was afraid to have a drink because he feared death, the test in the hospital having made a very definite impression on him. He prayed constantly and luckily he met a woman who cared for him. The result was a complete and a happy rehabilitation. He was my first complete success and I marvelled at the miracle which had taken place. "There is a divinity that shapes our ends."

His name was John, and he became a live wire in the Alcoholics Anonymous organization, where stories of his drinking experiences and his spontaneous original remarks caused great amusement to many another alcoholic. He always said that he was the blackest sheep that ever sought assistance.

I will never forget a story he told us after his first sober Christmas, when asked by an interested party if he could recollect ever having a sober Christmas in his life.

"Yes," he said dryly, "when I was fourteen years old." On this same sober Christmas even a Native approached him and asked: "What is wrong with Baas John, are you sick?"

"Why?" asked John.

"Because you are sober and you gave me a tip."

He told the Alcoholics Anonymous meeting of his thought that same night.

Another time, when he had one over the mark and was walking along the sidewalk under an avenue of trees, he bumped into a tree and fell back into sitting position. He looked straight ahead of him and saw many trees. He remembered somebody telling him that he should cover up one eye to see better. He tried to pass the trees and found himself in a

sitting position again. Then he heard children laughing around him, and he felt very ashamed and asked them to help him through the forest. This caused more laughter and they told him that there was only one tree in front of him.

Once he was in a car smash and was badly injured, but with his half bottle of brandy safe and sound in his hip pocket, he felt happy and contented. He was kept in hospital for six months due to the number of fractures he sustained.

After John, came Paul, Paul the second, Victor, William, Willie, Willem, Piet number one, Piet number two and so on. As these men came I slowly perfected my technique and made my own conditions, which were mainly that the person seeking aid must come on his own free will and submit himself unconditionally to my treatment and direction. Each one must admit to himself that he or she was an alcoholic. By this method things became easier not only for the patient but also for myself and my hospital staff.

To the alcoholic was explained what treatment he would have to undergo, and he signed consent for the necessary treatment. Consent was essential and demanded by law because the treatment is a shock therapy. (Actually assault just like an operation for which full consent was required.) He would be treated like a patient, not like a criminal.

Treatment by antabuse when conducted outside of a hospital is not safe, and should never be made use of without the knowledge and consent of the sufferer.

In hospital this treatment is very much safer, but it must be carried out under medical control.

9. ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS ENTERS MY LIFE

DURING my institution days I was sent literature on Alcoholics Anonymous, but had little time to concentrate on it, and just ignored the business.

I thought that I could help myself and that it was just a matter of will-power.

Firstly I realized that I was a medical problem and, when cured of my ailments and craving, I would be normal again. I thought: "One day I will be able to have a few drinks daily like other people without going to the gutter."

Above all, I thought: "What can a bunch of ex-drunks tell me about my own complicated troubles. I would rather keep everything to myself, it would be safer. My secret is my own and I do not want to share it with anybody else."

I could not bear the idea of telling anybody that I was an alcoholic and that I could not drink again. I was a man and would be one again.

I needed no advice. No cure for my drinking habits. I read and studied alcoholism and my conclusion was, that it cannot be cured. I was definitely not going to associate with ex-drunks, down and outers, jailbirds, and criminals. I was far too superior, and was master of my own ship. I could manage my own affairs; I just needed a helping hand to get on the right road, and then I would never look back.

I felt that it would be a disgrace to my family if I joined Alcoholics Anonymous. I would just be on the precipice of another drinking bout, and I did not want anything to do with a club or organization or a group of ex-drunks, because I would then be classified as one myself.

One very busy day, a stranger presented himself in my office and introduced himself to me, as Leon; I showed him a chair

and asked him his business. He told me baldly that he was a member of the Alcoholics Anonymous. I was on edge immediately and told him that I did not hold with their ideas. He asked me if I knew the functions of A.A. I thought him very impertinent and told him that I had studied it but had an open mind about the matter. He soon realized that I was either too reluctant to converse with him or that I was too busy. He bade me a very friendly "cheerio" and added that he would see me again, asking me in the same breath what time I usually finished work. I answered him curtly and he left. I sighed with relief.

A few weeks passed and I was asked by my Secretary if I could spare a few minutes for a friend called Leon. I informed her that I was going for tea and I went. After tea I met Leon in the passage of the hospital and he greeted me very cordially, and at the same time conveyed regards from certain people, calling them by their first names, which did not register with me. I invited him to my office partly because I was ashamed that this man should be seen in my company. He was an ex-drunk and looked one. I wondered what he really wanted. Probably he wanted to borrow something, but my worst feeling was that he might want to blackmail me. He knew something about me, and seeing that I held a good Government billet it was his chance to drain me. I had to face this business and get it over. He repeated greetings from another person and I recognized the name. Yes, I was in for it. My past had caught up with me.

Suddenly he said:

"Doc, can we have a meeting to-night?"

I was dumbfounded and startled. The worst had come. I knew it all along, my wife would be told of something which I had withheld from her.

"Your office or in your home will do!"

I was perspiring by then and was visibly perturbed. I managed to ask meekly:

"What kind of meeting?"

"An Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, of course."

I was relieved but hesitant.

"Why to-night?"

"Because I want you to start the A.A. Group here. I have spoken to John, Cecil, and Dennis already. They are willing if you agree."

It was no blackmail meeting, and in a way I felt pleased because I had not seen my ex-patients since they had left hospital. I agreed.

Then Leon opened up and started to talk more freely and fluently about the movement. I became vaguely interested. He was a good speaker and a persuasive one. I liked him just a little then, but was still dubious about his real objective. I accompanied him out of my office, out of the hospital and to his car. He talked all the time. I thought he was overflowing and too anxious about the whole business. It might come to nothing.

I told my wife about the pending visit. She was excited. This gave me encouragement, but deep in my heart I was horrified. I wondered if I could join such a Group. I hoped it would die swiftly. I was sure that other ex-drunks or alcoholics would show little interest.

Leon duly arrived with two men in his car. He made himself comfortable in my favourite rocking chair, and hauled out a bunch of papers and a small thin blue book. One man with him was John, the others I did not know. He introduced himself by his first name. Up to then I did not know Leon's surname either.

Leon started talking after he had a cup of tea, and at intervals read from notes. He was engrossed in his explanation and detailed everything he said with utmost precision. I started to take great interest in his words, and was encouraged by noticing that John too was taking notice. Of course my wife was all eyes and ears, and I could see that she was eating Leon's words. She was very quiet and listened intently, while Leon was expostulating the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, explaining the day-by-day programme and giving details of Group therapy.

I liked him first, then I admired him. He was a fair haired man with keen blue eyes, a large forehead with a perfect nose. He wore glasses. Whenever he referred to his notes, he looked over them when addressing us. My conclusion was that his soul and spirit was in everything he was relating to us. He was genuine and a good man, who was out to help others. He loved his alcoholic fellow men. He was a good example of a man with self-respect and will-power. He was also very frank and humorous, punctuating his serious discourse with funny remarks which caused us to smile and even laugh.

"If a man told me that I would never drink again I would worry myself to death, because I am not a camel," he said once.

"What happened yesterday I do not care about, and what happens to-morrow I care less."

"To become a member of Alcoholics Anonymous costs a fortune," he reminded us. "It is the most expensive club in the world to join." "Never become an alcoholic non-drinking snob. Give or stand the other person his poison, and drink your own medicine, which is good for you. Alcohol is anathema to you."

"Our only master is our Creator," he ended.

The more questions you asked him the more he liked it and answered everything to our satisfaction. It was well past midnight when Leon left his two companions. He called on me next morning and an inaugural meeting was fixed.

He left Vaaldorp a happier man, and I was ashamed of my misgivings and suspicions, but was now more contented. On the 19th September 1953 we had our inaugural meeting. Over thirty people were present, consisting mainly of my ex-patients and their wives. Leon brought four A.A. members with him. Amongst them was a lady. She gave my two lady patients courage and understanding.

I made the introductory speech explaining that alcoholism was a disease, demonstrating with a dummy brain where the lesion was situated. This lesion is situated in the lining of the fourth vertricle of medulla or hindbrain, according to authorities on the

subject of alcoholism. Whenever an alcoholic who has been off drink for a long time partakes of even the minutest quantity of alcohol this thickening or lesion becomes congested, and the craving is stimulated.

Other physical defects are polyneuritis in the calf muscles of the legs, arthritis with neuritis, headaches and abdominal pains. These defects were usually more marked under the influence of alcohol, which is a depressant habit forming drug.

There were also psychological ailments, mainly the persecutory element. An alcoholic always thought that everybody was against him. Every person he met reprimanded, scolded or preached to him.

The disease of Alcoholism was a very complex one. It is three evils rolled in one: spiritual, mental and physical.

Eric spoke about the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in South Africa, how the first national conference on the treatment of alcoholism was called. He maintained that this problem was everybody's business. Sixteen persons in the direct environment of an alcoholic were affected. Before treatment adversity; after treatment, prosperity and happiness prevail.

Leon spoke about his favourite subject the day-by-day programme. He took the Lord's prayer as his foundation. The Lord taught us to pray and ask "this day our daily bread." We were not taught to ask for a ration for months or years, but just sufficient for one day. Thus we should ask God on Whose Love we depend, to keep us sober just for one day, twenty-four hours. God also made the world in six days, every day he completed just one task. God could have created the world in one day, but He taught us to do one thing at a time.

Yesterday is past, and we cannot rectify the wrongs we did, we cannot relive that day.

To-morrow is beyond our power, we cannot plan for the future, we do not know if we would live another few seconds.

So we must ask God to keep us sober just for to-day. To give us control over the first drink. The first drink is the start, the

second too many and the third made us thirsty. To live a useful and sober life just for one day was not too much, but to ask to live likewise for one month or a year would fill us with fear. At the end of the day we must not forget to thank God for His mercy.

From one good sober day another can easily follow, and so week can follow week and month month.

After a few more short talks, we adjourned for refreshment, tea, coffee, soft drinks and cakes. The party was concluded well past midnight.

That night we decided that we would have a meeting each Wednesday night.

Our first few meetings were slapdash. We did not know how to conduct them properly and with order. A meeting would usually break up with a few sitting over there and a small group sitting around another member bragging and telling them about his experiences.

We realized that such meetings would get us nowhere. We should have proper procedure, proper discussion and orderly meetings.

I studied my A.A. books for guidance and asked advice from Leon.

So we started studying the steps one by one, from the first to the twelfth. We concentrated on each step under discussion. After each meeting we met intimately and socially and shared our troubles and triumphs in our new life.

Only then did we find direction, and we grew from strength to strength.

We in Vaaldorp had developed the most unique A.A. Group. We were all hospital-treated alcoholics, admitted and confessed that we were alcoholics and that as alcoholics there was no known cure for us. Our craving for drink had ceased, our drinking habits had been replaced by hobbies, hard work and the desire to help other fellow alcoholics.

We did not solicit members, we did not sober up drunks,

people noticed our changed lives and our examples encouraged the drinking alcoholic to come forward to rid himself of misery.

Strange as it might seem the clergy were antagonistic towards our group. They first condemned us because it was said that we do not believe in the Church or depend on God to help us. We proved to them that we did ask for help from a Power Greater than ourselves and we worshipped Him as we understood Him. For Christians this Power is the Trinity of God, for others It may be Buddha, Mohammed or even the Sun. The main object was that we endeavoured to create a Vision of Love and Faith, Something Higher, More Powerful to assist us with our problems.

Alcoholism is by no means confined to christians and all thus need a Power greater than themselves to achieve contented sobriety.

As we had proved that in an A.A. programme seven out of the twelve rules are spiritual, the majority of the Clergy were very helpful and tried hard to understand alcoholism as a disease.

The medical men, on the other hand, were very slow in offering their assistance. They were more inclined to assist financially than actively. Every medical man would gladly smooth the bitter and sorry way of the alcoholic's wife by giving her a prescription for Antabuse tablets (or, as commonly called, Anti-alcoholic pills). He would instruct her how to give them to him, secretively, either in thick milk or porridge.

These tablets have no taste and when crushed cannot be noticed easily. This secret home treatment is very dangerous and may prove to be fatal. The alcoholic soon notices that whenever he has had his usual drink he is ill, and this causes suspicion. The first person to be blamed is his wife, so there is more misery and quarrels than one could imagine. The alcoholic scolds and bullies his wife the more, thrashes her, neglects his home more, eats less at home, and frequents the bar more often.

The prescribing of Antabuse tablets, which are a poison, should be stopped by law, because it is illegal to prescribe a drug which causes severe shock to a patient. Shock is equivalent to assault

and assault is equivalent to an operation for which a willing consent is demanded by law.

Other medical men again would admit alcoholics to hospital, if they were suffering from acute alcoholic poisoning, Antabuse-alcoholic shock, or the after-effects of alcohol like gastro-enteritis or polyneuritis. The diagnosis was usually a fanciful one and the nursing staff was supposedly bluffed. If the alcoholic behaved himself and did not develop delirium tremens within the first three days, his doctor would prescribe Antabuse tablets. The nursing staff, who knew all along that the patient was an alcoholic, administered the drugs but the patient was kept in the dark about the dangers awaiting him. This is also a secretive treatment and should be entirely discontinued.

If the poor alcoholic developed delirium tremens he was fed on brandy, or discharged and left to the gods. With correct treatment no alcoholics should go into delirium tremens, which disease can have fatal results.

The Committee for the Treatment of Alcoholism founded in Vaaldorp developed a completely new approach toward this disease.

The Committee, consisting of well-known people in good positions, supplied the finance and welcomed the Alcoholics Anonymous for the after-treatment of alcoholics. A subcommittee to develop better hospital facilities and to give clinical aid was formed.

So we had the Committee for finance, the hospital for correct treatment, and the Alcoholics Anonymous for after-treatment, all working harmoniously.

We have an average of three patients daily receiving treatment through the hospital either as in-patients or as out-patients. These patients are given an interview beforehand and the whole treatment is thoroughly explained to each prospective patient. He surrenders himself unconditionally to the full treatment. He is not subjected to treatment unless he understands it and signs consent.

The alcoholic must clearly understand that he submits himself

to treatment entirely voluntarily, both for himself and the whole world. If the admission is half-hearted, the treatment is a certain failure. He must not be ashamed to admit it to his old fellow drinkers, who will tease him at first, but will admire him in the long run. There is no incomplete treatment. It is the "whole hog" or nothing.

An alcoholic is the most selfish individual there is. He will deny himself food and clothing just to drink. Thus he must be selfish just once more, and give himself everything that is good: sobriety, self-respect and will-power. By doing so he will change his whole atmosphere and create a decent environment. Sixteen individuals in his immediate proximity will be favourably affected by his recovery.

The alcoholic must be born again, exchange his sordid living and misery for a clean and useful mode of living. This is only done by complete abstinence, and by following and practising the A.A. programme for the rest of his natural life.

The A.A. fellowship is a true and genuine comradeship. It has been caused by a crisis. Each individual alcoholic knows good expensive living, heavy drinking, and then the rapid downgrade route of melancholy and fear, which make him strike rock bottom. He has financial, domestic troubles, emotional and physical fear, aggressive antagonism, sexual inertia, and a constant impulsion to drink.

When he lifts himself out of the mire and associates with other men and women who have been through the same vicious circle he feels at home, security is reborn, and he becomes an asset to the community again.

All alcoholics "love" each other while they drink together, but a greater love is found when they all become sober.

I

A Miscellany of Letters

AT the 1956 Alcoholics Anonymous Congress at Cape Town, it was conservatively estimated that there are 90,000 alcoholics in South Africa.

These are in all walks of life, and the response to my newspaper articles on the treatment of alcoholism brought letters that illustrated the diversity of people affected by this tragic problem. These letters have not been "edited" except to disguise identities.

Dear Dr. —

I was so pleased to see that you can help alcoholics and I am hoping that you will be kind enough to help my poor sister. I would indeed be ever grateful. She is 60 years old. Very charming, but a hopeless drunkard. She is a secret drinker. It's a dreadful tragedy. We are well-known people in our small district, so naturally I wish to keep it to ourselves. Most evenings she is completely out of action. We have tried Vitamin B 1 tabs, also *The* book Alcoholics Anonymous, The Twelve Steps, prayers, etc., but all useless. As I don't want anyone to know about it, may I ask you to send anything needed from your chemist. If injections are needed I have a daughter, a trained nurse, quite able to give same. I am enclosing a small cheque for anything required from the chemist.

A thousand thanks to you and if you will be kind enough to help a poor soul and God bless you always.

Very gratefully,
(Mrs.) O. G. M.

Dear Doctor,

I am writing to you at the suggestion of Dr. A. J. who states that you are deeply interested in Alcoholism and may be able to assist me in my desire to see my wife restored to a more normal outlook and approach to her daily life.

It all started about fifteen years ago when I was stationed at a little town called A. where her social circle was a vivacious hard drinking core of the town and district. Her health was not good and her nerves were very upset, by war anxiety besides the cares of two young daughters. She is small, dark complexioned with blue eyes, very highly strung and imaginative, extremely versatile and clever, weighs only 96 pounds. Her constitution is

sound and strong. Her father will be 80 next February and is still hail and hearty, while her mother will be 78 in November. She still does all her own housework, besides sewing, knitting and painting when inspired.

During the fifteen years in question she had the usual periods of better and worse. While I was stationed at L.T. from 1944 to 1948 she was under the care of Dr. J. A. R. of E. H. and although he did not directly attempt to cure her of drinking his influence was very beneficial to her. In 1948 we were moved to W. where she became so bad and desperate that she was placed under Dr. C.'s care in J. for nearly two months. Unfortunately whilst at the N. N. H. her contact with the other patients there introduced her to the barbiturate substitute and this further addiction has not tended to make matters any easier for her. To make matters worse one of the W. doctors offered to treat her upon her return from N. and he too resorted to barbiturates which only added coals to the fire. She made several very good friends in W. and with their assistance she managed to get along somehow. Dr. C. had prescribed "Antabuse" tablets and with the aid of these she also managed several fairly long breaks, but not without some feeling of resentment, however, so that it always broke down under stress.

Upon our transfer to L. the loss of her friends and the children, who were obliged to attend a boarding school, made matters desperate again and in January this year she went to P. where Dr. G did his best to assist her by introducing her to the A.A. At the same time to relax her tensions he prescribed a mixture of Dexadrine and Barbitone which was most beneficial for so long as she adhered to the prescription of only two tablets per day. Once again the barbitone undid all the psychological good and made her indifferent to the advice and assistance of the A.A. There is a branch at S. 35 miles away and both the Chairman and the Secretary have put themselves out no end to assist her, but in her present frame of mind she is very indifferent. A few days ago she persuaded Dr. J. to give her 30 luminols and almost finished

the lot in one day. You will appreciate with what unhappy effect.

Unfortunately my circumstances tie me down to L. until it pleases my Head Office to transfer me elsewhere and as a salaried man with three daughters my finances preclude expensive treatment, also from past experience I find that although my wife is discontented and unhappy at home she frets terribly and is even more unhappy away from home. As long as I can influence her to take the "Antabuse" tablets voluntarily our home is perfect, but when the craving becomes unbearable she only pretends to take them and the first opportunity all the good work of weeks is undone again. She has most of the A.A. literature but after reading it a few times she has lost interest and simply hates my prompting her in any way. She smokes heavily too and reads a great deal, is quick brained and a very interesting talker.

I have given you the whole story so that you can appreciate all the facts and be in a better position to judge whether you are able to assist us in any way.

Thanking in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,
E.H.

Dear Doc,

I herewith wish to offer my thanks to you and the Hospital staff for all you have done for me. I am indeed very grateful. I thought you might like to know that I have not yet slipped and also that I feel wonderful.

I have had an offer for a job at V., O.F.S. from A. at the plant there. I hope you do not mind to recommend me as I referred them to you concerning a recommendation. Please "doc" don't let a good fellow down. I wanted them to know that I belonged to A.A. before I took the job.

I have also written to Gerrie and asked him to speak to you. Again thank you very much, and my sincere greetings to all the

members of the Klerksdorp branch. I hope to visit you again one day, and I will mention you to whatever branch I may join here or in O.F.S.

Best Regards and Good Luck.
J. P.

Dear Dr. —

I am writing to you as my husband is a alcoholic and we have a very hard struggle to get through with our home as most goes on drink. I find cant stand it, it is a unbearable thing in the house when you have children. I do anything if my husband could stop drink. Hoping Doctor, you could do something for me.

Yours faithfully,
A. S.

Dear Dr. —

I seen in last night star you could help alcoholic. We have two people in our house, the mother and father are very heavy drinkers they have seven little ones who can hardly help themselves. The eldest is 11, the youngest 1 year. It is terrible to see such a case. Otherwise they are good, but when are they without drink. Hoping you will be able to do something for them please.

Yours faithfully,
G. S.

Dear Dr. —

My husband is an alcoholic and he would like very much to become free of it as drink makes a home very unhappy, otherwise he is a very good man but drink make a lot of unhappiness.

Yours
M. C. H.

Dear Dr. —

A few days ago I read in the "Daily News" about your wonderful work, and I am hoping that you can spare me a few of your precious moments.

I have three children, the two younger are Alcoholics, my son 42 years this coming May, and daughter just turned 40. Both are married with children.

If you can help a very distressed mother (widow) I shall be most grateful.

Yours faithfully,
G. M. S.

Dear Dr. —

I read in the paper recently that you give treatment of Alcoholism with such good results. I wonder if you could do anything for me.

My husband is a heavy drinker. I would like to treat him secretly, if possible, as he would not take anything on his own accord.

Please let me know if you could help me.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,
R. E. E.

Dear Sir,

On reading this notice in the Natal Daily News, I feel I must write to you for help for my daughter Mrs. M., who is at present a patient in Mount Collins. She is a pathetic case. She is one of the most attractive woman, a charming personality, her only failing is Brandy. Her husband led her to it and when she could not

leave it alone he left her for another woman in March, 1944. At that time she lived in Randfontein. During easter of that year I went and fetched her to Durban to live with me. She gets wonderful jobs but unfortunately when she gets money she goes on the brandy. For ten years I looked after her and then I felt my strength leaving me. So my Dr. contacted the magistrate to see if they could get her into Mount Collins for me which they did at the end of last March. Do please help me Sir. I am a widow with another invalid daughter an Epileptic case 34 years of age. M. is a twin, she is 43. If you contact Mount Collins they may let her go to you for treatment she would help you in the hospital whilst undergoing treatment. She has had 2 trials in employment but each time has fallen to Brandy and has had to go back to Mount Collins. You can also phone Cransley House which is the Rand Aid old woman's home. Phyllis worked there for 3 weeks as a help in the sick bay. I know you will get an excellent report about her other than her failing in liquor. I am a sister of the late . . M. P. of Cape Town. Help her Dr. please to help herself. I am living in the pensioners cottages at the above address. I am a widow with a War Veterans pension I served in the army for 6 years.

With my undying gratitude I thank you.

Respectfully yours,

L. S.

Dear Dr. —

There is an article in the newspaper some weeks ago, mentioning your work as a foundation member of Alcoholics Anonymous. If this is the case I hope you wont mind my appealing to you to help my husband. I have spoken to our Doctor here about asking your organisation for help, and he told me that you could do nothing unless my husband went himself and asked for help. Unfortunately I don't think he will ever reach the stage of asking

you, himself, so he simply relies on his family to pull him round after each bout, and even his business for him. Isn't it possible for a member of the A.A. to contact him, and offer help? Under these circumstances I feel he would be only too glad to accept any aid or advice. I do beg you to do what you can in this matter. Our children are growing up and the situation is rapidly becoming intolerable, especially as his bouts of drinking are becoming more frequent. At one time he went for three years without a breakdown, now he is only keeping sane and sober for two or three months between the bouts.

Will you please address your reply to Miss M. J. (my daughter) as the discovery that I had written to you for advice would probably only upset my husband still further.

Please forgive me for troubling you, but believe me that we are feeling pretty desperate. I do hope and pray that you will be able to help us.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

J. J.

Dear Dr. —

I am taking the liberty of writing to you as I noticed an article in the Daily Despatch of the 10th March in which you had treated 200 alcoholics successfully, and that your treatment was free. I am writing now to ask you for some advice and help.

My husband is an elderly man of 71 years of age and has for the past 10 years completely given way to drink owing to ill health, anxiety and sorrow. *He will not agree to any* treatment what so ever and has no desire to give up his all too frequent "spot." I know that it is quite possible to cure this condition with the patients co-operation, but I wonder if you can suggest or advise any special approach to the patient to win his co-operation or any diet which could purify and strengthen him so as

not to resort to drink. He takes Vit. B. tablets regularly, but has a poor appetite being a heavy smoker too.

I shall most gratefully appreciate your advice in any way and especially home treatment which you may suggest.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

A. C. S.

Dear Dr. —

Pardon me for writing to you and imposing on your most valuable time.

I take the liberty to do so according to a short article, which I read in the Star of the 28th of February, about you and the work you do for alcoholics.

As I read it a ray of Hope and Joy came into my soul that you will be able to help and advise me.

My eldest son, who is 45 years has taken to drink through his friends, (the old, old story) for a few years now.

He has a responsible job, with the City Council at P. as electric cable layer. He realizes the danger he is in, but cannot pull himself together again and leave off drinking, he must be helped. He never drinks when in his work, but as soon as they stop after 5 o'clock he goes to a bar and does not go home until 9 or 10 o'clock at night, of course under the influence of liquor.

He has a lovely wife and two children, who are almost nervous wrecks, because of his drinking. I am afraid of the breaking up of his home, if something is not being done, which will be a dreadful thing to all of the relatives.

When he is sober, you cannot meet a better man.

How I pray for his restoration again to a happy family life.

I am the Supervisor for the catering department of this Hotel.
My son may be visiting me in June.

I am prayerfully awaiting your reply to my letter.

God bless your work.

Sincerely yours,

M. E. G.

Dear Dr. —

Enclosed please find a letter of introduction from Mr. B. van N. formerly from K. Transvaal.

I should be very grateful if you will give me your advice about an alcoholic patient of mine which is at present under my treatment in the H. Hospital.

A European male aged 57 years. Married for 30 years without family. Comes from a good and respected stock. His eldest brother was apparently also an alcoholic but was able to give it up immediately his doctor warned him about the effect the alcohol was having on his health. There is no other evidence of alcoholism in his parents or other brothers or sisters.

He started off his adult life as a farmer with very little money. From all accounts he worked very hard, so much so that he is considered a fairly rich man to-day. He does not farm actively any more having hired out his three farms and now lives in H. for the last 6 months. He is however still interested in the farms to the extent of keeping him busy enough.

His home life was apparently quite happy until marred by alcohol. I know his wife very well and I am quite certain she is a most charming lady aged 56 years with an amazing amount of patience, tact and an ability of to be cheerful in the face of adverse circumstances.

For apparently no reason he started to take alcohol about 18 years ago getting progressively worse over the years. I have known him for the last 6 months and must say that I have seldom

seen him sober. More often than not he was brought from the hotels to his home in a paralytic state. All my efforts, threats and warnings were in vain. All my colleagues have met with the same amount of success.

His wife maintains that I have more influence over him than anyone up to date. I was rather doubtful about it until three weeks ago when he came to me out of his own asking me whether I could please help him.

I immediately put him in hospital and up to date he has had no alcohol. On examination I found him with a terrific gastritis, peripheral neuritis and a liver which was enlarged to five fingers; there was no obvious sign of cirrhosis.

For the last three weeks he has been clearing up very well—his liver being now about two fingers. There is very little evidence left of the peripheral neuritis and his appetite is so good that one can say with certainty that his gastric organ is almost normal. Haemorrhoids have disappeared altogether.

I can foresee that in the near future he will be more or less physically fit.

For the sake of his home life and because there are so many people that are sure that I am fighting a losing battle, I want to leave nothing to chance. He has voluntarily expressed determination that his drinking days are at an end. Not only do I not want to take his word for it but as you know very well there are always a host of "drinking pals." I am quite sure that I shall be able to keep him in hospital for another 5 weeks as he has told me that he has given himself entirely over to me.

I am thus at a stage where I feel that physically, at least, I have him in the palm of my hand.

Quite frankly I cannot allow this golden opportunity to slip through my fingers and therefore am turning to you with your vast experience of the dealing with alcoholics, for advice. Up to date I have made a point of not mentioning the cause of his illness because I am fully aware of the tremendous strain which he is going through and being of a short temper normally I have

felt that preaching and lecturing would perhaps do more harm than good. Prior to his leaving hospital I will give him Antabuse treatment but I do feel that that is not enough.

This man must be helped and I know of no better person to turn to but yourself.

If you wish to be furnished with more details I shall be only too pleased to give you same. However if you should within the next 5 weeks be passing through H. I shall be extremely delighted to introduce you to the patient and see whether with your help we cannot help a very needy case.

I am very anxious to hear from you.

Yours very gratefully,
J. B.

Dear Dr. —

Last week in the Natal Daily News I read an interesting account of the wonderful work you are doing in Vereeniging, and am wondering if I might ask you to help us.

My husband is going down hill very fast and I feel I can do nothing more to stop him drinking. The greatest trouble is that he is so obstinate and has a complex that he will not be told what to do by anyone—especially his wife.

He is very far from well so I wonder if you could advise me of a doctor in D. who is interested in helping alcoholics, if I could get a friend to persuade my husband to have an overhaul, and then the help from the Alcoholics Anonymous might follow.

I hope you will forgive me writing but believe me this trouble in our home is making the family very unhappy, and we will be very grateful for any help.

Yours faithfully,
I. N.

P.S. Sometime ago I went to see the A.A. but was told they could only help my husband if he would come himself.

Dear Dr. —

Having read your write-up in the Star dated 28th February, I feel that perhaps there still is a friend who will lift the utter darkness in which I seem to be surrounded.

L.'s death has been a dreadful shock to me, for believe me, Doctor, L. was the best God could give.

Doctor I am willing to do voluntary work (perhaps a light office job) something that will keep my mind occupied and shelter me from the world that at times could be beautiful and sometimes cruel.

I do not wish to ask for self pity, but feel that a complete break is necessary.

L. went overseas for the Railways. We had high ideas for 1955. Had intended to travel for at least 4 months for L. had so wished to let me see some of our own country.

Doctor, I shall phone you again and if there is anything that you may be able to do for me remember I shall be grateful.

Hoping you are in the best of health and hoping to one day have the opportunity to have a talk with you,

I remain,

Yours sincerely,
B. M.

Dear Dr. —

Your article in the Vaderland of the 1st has been read and re-read by my friend and myself. We have sons who have been treated and who have not responded to their treatment for drunkenness.

If we are not taking up too much of your valuable time will

you let us know how we can possibly arrange for help for these men. They are both 40 years of age.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours faithfully,
S. M. D. and
M. H. B.

Dear Dr. —

I was most interested in an article regarding your good work for Alcoholics which appeared in our local paper.

My reason for writing is to try and gain some knowledge from your point of view, especially one who has experienced what an alcoholic really feels.

My husband has been a member of "A.A." for 16 months now, but his longest period of sobriety has been 10 days. Whether this is a phobia with him, I am at a loss to say, but he cannot fight the urge, not to indulge, for longer than 10 days.

Our family Doctor M. understands the position thoroughly and has been most helpful in "putting him to sleep" for 24 hours or more to help him to sober up, but tries unsuccessfully to persuade him to go into hospital for treatment—this, J., my husband emphatically refused to do.

My appeal to you, Dr. —, is for help or advice through my Doctor, who with your knowledge, will be able to set J.'s feet on the road to "Absolute Abstinence."

As you have no doubt surmised, I am writing to you of my own accord, J. being at an "A.A." meeting, which meetings he attends very regularly.

Members of "A.A." keep in constant touch with him, yet there is just that "something" whatever it can be, that prevents him making the grade.

I trust you will forgive my approaching you, but for the sake of my two school going daughters and with 10 years of misery in

mind, I have reached the stage where I clutch at any straw.

I look forward to hearing from you, at your convenience as I realize you are a very busy man, but also with every hope that you may have the key to this problem.

Yours sincerely,

N. H.

Dear Sir,

Reading your article about curing alcoholics in the Star, it is a pleasure to know that there is somebody trying to help alcoholics. But what about the alcoholic that does not want to admit that he is one. Is there really nothing that could be given in their food secretly without them knowing, which will turn them ill, if they take drink. This has to be done gradually.

Awaiting yours in anticipation,

Yours faithfully,

C. W.

Dear Doc,

Arrived home safe and sound had terrible pains in head through all day. And getting spins all the time, knees and legs dont seem to want to hold me. Am taking Vit Tablets as prescribed by you—or given to me.

Am trusting in God to help me further. And pray that he give me power to lead other Alcoholics into the A.A. way the only way to Sobriety and happiness. As I know there is only one to prove actions not words. Again to night I pray to God to give me strength for the next 24 hours he will hearken unto sincere prayer I know.

Again I pray *O God lead thou me* on into thy way Thy will be done.

I was wondering if Mr. L. has a vacancy for me on the mine. Down there I would like to make K. my future home Town. We are a large family here and one bread earner. Doc I should be very grateful to you could it be in your power to assist me re the above.

Doc as I told you on leaving to meet a good samaritan. Its just a leg up. The rest I can do with the power of God.

L. is fine, and returns regards to you I hope to see you Thursday eve next God willing at A.A. meeting at the town hall.

Thanking you and the A.A. for all you have done for me to regain my sobriety.

Yours ever in unity in A.A.

H.

Dear Sir,

I must first ask you to pardon the liberty I am taking in writing to you, but I feel sure that after reading all this, you may well realize what a desperate fight I am waging, virtually for the sake of more than one life directly affected, and to what extent I am prepared to go to rectify matters. I do believe it can be done, but I'm afraid not without the assistance of persons with more experience in such matters, than I have.

I am 46 years of age, have been divorced for 4 months, my ex-wife (31) and two fine little boys 9 years and 6 live in V. in a house which did belong to me (inheritance), having given my half share to them to ensure a permanent residence for them. I idolise them, but I am an alcoholic!! Kind and gentle by nature, very conscientious, ambitious, frightfully or even embarrassingly emotional and horribly nervous.

About 23 years ago I had a kidney removed, consequently, my health today leaves a lot to be desired, especially as an electrician an occupation I am forced to discontinue due to spinal trouble. .

I could not continue as an electrician, my wife and my own

people failed to understand my terrible handicap physically and the tremendous amount of worry associated with this kind of trouble my kiddies so young, me so fond of my wife. Then the tragedy of the divorcell Through the A.A. I have now learned, that the subsequent course of events have made me a still easier prey as an alcoholic. I've lost everything—I've virtually lost my very existence now. Alone in this world, rejected, discarded as it were, endured malignant persecution from persons, who were not aware of what I had to contend with, unaware of what was going through my mind, regarding my loved ones, and by them interfering have made matters a thousand times worse. I now feel so completely frustrated, broken in spirit, especially in an institution of this kind.

I know, that if my wife understands me, as an alcoholic, and if I receive the attention and care and understanding, the matter can be switched from utter hopelessness to perfect success and happiness. But so few people, other than the alcoholic, understand these things. This is where I having been advised by prominent members of various A.A. groups on the Reef, to appeal to you for assistance and advice. It is such a grave matter that I will spare no effort to combat my weakness, but I also do realise that without the moral support from my wife, whom I love dearly, the battle is lost. It is in this respect, that I would venture to suggest, if I may, that you write her a letter, feeling, that this kind of action coming from a man of your caliber and wide experience is going to remove so many obstacles in my way towards achieving ultimate success in reconciliation and re-establishing the lost ground and confidence from my wife. As things are today, I realise the safest place for me is to remain inside this institution, in order to stay out of prison, which I feel is going to follow now if I dare set foot outside these gates, with nothing but utter loneliness and frustration staring me in the face, the alcoholic's most deadly enemy as you know yourself.

In order to overcome the setback regarding my spinal trouble, I have, thank the Good Lord, developed a certain Patent, and

registered it, relating to a individual cylinder. It is a most simple and revolutionary arrangement, but owing to its slightly high selling price to the farmers I have had great difficulties in getting this product on the market. . . .

My wife, and my people, who really think I am mad concerning this patent, do not know what they have done by opposing me so much in its development, commercially, and by sending me to an institution, the divorce which followed and rendering ever a bigger alcoholic through their stupid actions.

But I can assure you that there is nothing more sincere in my heart, than reconciliation with my wife and kiddies, their future happiness and security, and complete sobriety. What, in the line of maintenance (£18 per month) can she expect from me to-day? It is utter folly to expect that from me, spending the rest of my life in and out of this place or—prison. . . .

My first line of defence is reconciliation with my wife, through professional assistance.

From the foregoing I hope you will be able to conclude how serious, yes, desperate I consider my position to be. I am of course much more concerned about the welfare of my wife and kiddies, a fact which she so badly misunderstood.

In view of the bitterness and disappointment in her heart at the moment, outside influences particularly from one like your goodself will carry far more weight than anything I could possibly think of achieving.

I hope to be released from the S. W. C. in February, but I must start preparing myself for facing that given task ahead of me.

Words expressing myself for writing to you, enlisting your help, and what you may be doing about it, fail me, I only thrust that I have not made a fool of myself (and above all, touched your integrity and dignity) which I shall feel very sorry for having done so.

Your faithfully,
R. v. d. R.

II

ALCOHOLISM AND ITS TREATMENT

ALCOHOLISM

Scientists have compared alcoholism to allergic or sensitivity applications like asthma, hay fever, urticaria etc.

The principal toxic factor of alcoholic drinks is *Ethyl alcohol* $\text{O}_2\text{DH}_5\text{OH}$, but in cheap wines and spirits other toxic bodies, such as the higher alcohols (constituents of fusel oil) are present and they considerably raise the toxicity; Methyl alcohol is in cheap wines, and is more toxic than ethyl alcohol and produces profound coma and sometimes optic neuritis and permanent blindness.

Whisky, brandy, rum, and gin: 30–45 % of alcohol by volume.
Wines 10–20 %, Beers 4–7 %, Cider 3–8 %.

1. Alcohol is a depressant and not a stimulant.
2. It is a habit-forming drug.
3. It is seldom required in modern medical practice.
4. It has an action which affects all persons, but certain people can tolerate it much less than others; the results of taking much alcohol are obvious to all.
5. It increases the incidence of venereal disease, lowers resistance to infections, leads to carelessness in talk and in making decisions, and accounts for a high incidence of common offences and crimes of violence.
6. It impairs efficiency at work and sport, lowers morale, and prevents good leadership which demands good health, self discipline, judgment and ability to set a good example.
7. Perfect health is favoured by avoiding the habitual use of alcohol as a beverage.

CAUSES OF ALCOHOLISM

✓ Alcoholism is an escape from reality. The alcoholic uses alcohol as a defence against reality.

Many of us without knowing try to escape from reality through intense work or play. When such measures do not suffice we are forced to develop neurotic symptoms or ulcers or something of the kind—or we may resort to alcohol.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF ALCOHOLISM

Old classifications:

1. Acute alcoholism.
2. Chronic alcoholism.
3. Dipsomania.
4. Delirium tremens.
5. Korsakoff's Syndrome:
 - (a) Loss of memory and discrimination.
 - (b) Polyneuritis.

Modern classification:

1. Symptomatic alcoholic.
2. Reactive alcoholic.
3. Essential alcoholic.

In the *symptomatic alcoholic* the alcoholism is of minor import, with the solution of the underlying psychiatric, organic or neurotic problem it disappears.

The *reactive alcoholic* is a sporadic drinker being a reaction to reality stress.

The *essential alcoholic* is really suffering from a threefold disorder: spiritual, mental, and physical. He is a poor prospect for treatment.

In all these types it must be recognized that alcoholism is a symptom of some disturbance in character structure, or the personality, or the body of the individual.

Another classification:

1. Primary idiosyncrasy to alcohol.
2. Secondary compensatory alcoholism.
3. Mixed or bipartite alcoholism.

ITS DISTRIBUTIONS

In cities and large towns alcoholism is more rife because of the speed of life and the many entertainments. Young people attend many functions and entertainments, at which liquor always presents itself.

PROGNOSIS

The old saying *once a drunkard always a drunkard* is misleading, but in modern light this is the truth: *once an alcoholic always an alcoholic*, due to the degenerative changes in cells of the grey matter of the brain and to the permanent thickening of the lining of the 4th ventricle in the medulla.

Scientific investigation has conclusively determined that alcoholism is not transmissible through germ-plasm. Thus it is not hereditary.

An alcoholic can never again become a moderate or social drinker. Total abstinence is the only cure.

TREATMENT

The alcoholic must be treated with kindness. The alcoholic is a past master at manipulating his environment to his own end.

It is important to state that a relapse does not necessarily mean insincerity, failure or grounds for abandoning a particular patient. In one who is sincere a "slip" sometimes leads to improved attitudes and a better chance for improvement. It is only through a "slip" that improved attitudes develop.

An alcoholic is often a person of good standing, in good employment, and of decent family. He is usually a good man. It is often heard that "He is a good man and kind to his family but oh!

the drink," or "He drinks because he worries and worries because he drinks."

Preventative treatment.

In the preventative treatment of alcoholism, we as a community must join the nationwide campaign to combat this national source which is creating havoc in our young nation. This is why the late Dr. Bremer, then Minister of Social Welfare, called the first National Conference on alcoholism in 1951.

Local committees were formed to:

- (a) endeavour to educate and enlighten the children, young people and adults in their respective areas against alcoholism. This education to take the form of lectures, movies and forming of youth clubs.
- (b) establish an information centre, where necessary information and reading material can be obtained, as to how to join in the fight against this disease.
- (c) gain public interest.
- (d) obtain a few beds in the respective provincial hospitals to treat transient cases.
- (e) recommend to the Social Welfare Department any other means to combat alcoholism.
- (f) collect monies to support this work.

Types of patients in institutions:

- (a) Ambulant.
- (b) Intoxicated.
- (c) Stretcher.

Routine examination is made of each patient, e.g. blood, urine, and C.S.F. to exclude infectious or contagious diseases.

All patients suffer from avitaminosis, especially of Vit. B1, which is destroyed by alcohol or its effects in the system, e.g. Chronic Gastritis, which prevents proper absorption of vitamins. The patient receives intravenous dextrose plus vitamins daily for the first ten days. Thereafter he receives intracutaneous injection of vitamins plus liver. He is now a resident out-patient and visits the dispensary every day.

After this course of injections he receives a good quantity of vitamin tablets with the necessary instructions.

Weight of each patient is recorded regularly.

A visiting M.O. examines all new cases weekly and recommends additional treatment, e.g. extraction of teeth etc.

A visiting psychiatrist has an interview with each patient, and if deemed necessary, has further interviews at regular intervals. Alcohol is not given at all.

Barbiturates are given with extreme caution.

Withdrawal symptoms, e.g. gastro-enteritis and neuritis, are treated as they arise.

The ambulant patient is treated as an resident out-patient.

The intoxicated is placed in an observation ward until he is over his hangover. If he becomes violent he receives the cocktail, i.e. 20 cc. of 10 % dextrose; 1 cc. of Vit. B 1, 20 units of insulin and 100 mgm. of pethedine, intravenously. Then he is transferred to hospital or becomes an out-patient.

The stretcher case goes into the hospital.

OTHER DRUGS

Drugs like Antabuse, Ethyl alcohol, Apomorphine and emetine are also used. There are still others under investigation.

Apomorphine:

Apomorphine stimulates the medulla especially the vomiting centre; in addition it has a central depressant action.

The clinical effect of apomorphine is that it removes the craving, and leaves the patient with his freedom of action again.

Apomorphine sees the patient through his temporary crisis of emotional distress, removes tension and compensates the cerebral unbalance, thus giving the psychiatrist a better background for treating the underlying psychological disturbance or adjusting the faulty environment.

Apomorphine can also be used as a prophylactic where an aura or worsening (craving) occurs, it can be successfully aborted.

It has no action on the heart, circulation or stomach and treatment is confined to *a week* as compared to emetine which takes a year, and antabuse, which take two years.

Alcohol is used in conjunction with apomorphine treatment.

This treatment is drastic and cure is conditional on permanent abstinence.

REHABILITATION

When a man is committed to an institution, his family must be cared for, otherwise he will resort to his drinking habits again if he is discharged from an institution because he will be immediately found with financial difficulties and sometimes domestic troubles.

Rehabilitation must start in the institution, he must be allowed to work out, visit his home and relatives and so remain in touch with the community. Introduction to A.A. has been proved to be the surest road to successful rehabilitation.

III

HOSPITALIZATION OF ALCOHOLICS IN PROVINCIAL HOSPITALS

An Address

The Third Southern African Convention of the Alcoholics Anonymous was held over the Easter weekend 1954 in Johannesburg.

At this Convention it was decided to make an earnest appeal to your Group to assist the alcoholic.

At the outset we would like place on record our deep appreciation of the sympathy, understanding and help shown to this organization by the individual Medical Superintendents in the four provinces and in Rhodesia, but we have found that there is no unanimity towards the treatment of this grave socio-economic problem.

The observation is made generally, because there is a tradition in hospitals, and among the personnel, from the superintendent to the pupil nurse, that nothing can be done for, and dislike is fostered towards, the alcoholics. This prevents rendering the efficient services, medical and nursing, so badly needed by alcoholics who are sick individuals.

It has been authoritatively proved by medical authorities and experienced social workers that alcoholism is a disease. That there are *pathological changes in the fourth vertricle* of the medulla due to excessive drinking, has been established. This pathological change takes the form of a thickening of the interstitial lining of the fourth vertricle and whenever the minutest quantity of alcohol is imbibed causes congestion of this thickening and the craving for more drink is thus stimulated, especially in persons who have been off drink for a long period.

We are also very conscious of the fact that *alcoholism is an incurable disease*, but an alcoholic can be cured of his drinking habits, if he submits himself unconditionally to corrective treat-

ment, which includes hospital treatment for his physical affliction and Alcoholics Anonymous therapy as after care.

A self-admitted alcoholic is usually a very sick man and seeks assistance. On many occasions he is actually a medical emergency.

It is for this reason that we to-day appeal to you, and in this appeal we are sure of the growing support of the medical profession in this country.

We mention the medical profession for, in Southern Africa, the enlightenment and understanding on the problems and scope of alcoholism has rapidly and intelligently begun to take hold. Daily this Group has proof that more and more medical men are admitting this disease as a growing public health problem.

We especially wish to appeal to your group as Medical Superintendents and Medical Officers-in-Charge of hospitals to be more considerate and sympathetic and to educate the respective medical and nursing staff that "alcoholism is a disease, not a chronic disease, and needs hospital attention."

We are also well aware of the fact that some alcoholics are difficult customers and unmanageable, even uncontrollable, and cause the nursing staff untold inconvenience. In these cases it is understandable that admittance to hospitals is refused, but here we are prepared to assist the hospital staff by having members of the A.A. Group to watch over this kind of patient.

In the hospitals where alcoholics have been admitted under the correct diagnosis of alcoholism it has been found to our greatest satisfaction that these patients behaved admirably and even assisted the nursing staff in minor duties. Obviously so that sisters in charge of these wards never refuse an alcoholic. On the other hand many medical men admit patients into hospitals under the fanciful diagnosis of Hepatitis, Gastritis, peripheral neuritis, pneumonia or avitaminosis, deliberately obscuring or camouflaging the real cause of admission, namely alcoholism. This causes more ill feeling and discontent between nurse and doctor, especially if after the third day the patient develops delirium tremens. This is very unfair on the patient because he is

then treated with awe and horror and his condition may develop into a permanent nervous malady or he may suffer fatal consequences. On the other hand it has a very lasting and demoralizing effect on the nurse who was in attendance on the D.T.s patient.

The alcoholics treated in Provincial hospitals are very grateful towards the staff concerned. They feel that they have been treated like human beings, like ordinary patients, not as social outcasts, criminals or gaolbirds. In the hospital they are given a real chance of recovery, they meet fellow patients suffering from various other diseases, converse with each other and with visitors. They are not ashamed of their own affliction and talk about it. This is very important, because when an alcoholic admits he is beaten, his troubles are practically over.

These patients enter the hospital at their own request and sign a special consent form for the treatment of Antabuse or Cronetal, which is often administered in secret by housewives or friends outside the hospitals; this latter kind of treatment has proved fatal in a number of cases.

In addition to the above treatment they receive vitamin injections and cortisone. The latter drug prohibits the risk of delirium tremens and makes the patient calm and clear within a few days.

In the case of very ill patients, those suffering from exposure and dehydration, intravenous administration of fluids with vitamins is given.

On the tenth day the patients are given an alcoholic beverage and they experience the *Antabuse-Alcoholic shock*, which has a tremendous psychological effect on them. It illustrates to them that they are now sensitive to alcohol and that they cannot and must not drink again.

During his period of hospitalisation and after-care treatment, the patient is given the opportunity of associating himself with Alcoholics Anonymous.

The A.A. programme of recovery consists essentially of 12 suggested Steps towards arresting alcoholism and is based totally on

the experience of members who have recovered. The programme is therefore neither abstract nor theoretical.

Our appeal to have alcoholics admitted to Provincial hospitals has many reasons as you no doubt have grasped by now.

Further reasons are:

1. The treatment is short, thorough and drastic with a great measure of success.
2. Patients are back in their billets within a matter of two weeks, and those who had no billets are again fit and equipped with enough courage and health to seek employment.
3. Patients feel no shame and there is no blot on their characters.
4. They recover more rapidly and make the lives around them more pleasant. It is known for a fact that each alcoholic influences sixteen lives in his direct environment, thus for each alcoholic cured from his drinking habits sixteen people are again happy and contented.
5. There is little likelihood that they will revert to the old life as long as they remain active members of the A.A. If they do revert experience has shown that the relapse is short lived because they know where to ask assistance and usually do so promptly. This leads to better understanding and closer co-operation.
6. They become better citizens and join in the work of alleviating the problem of alcoholism.

There are big industrial managements, and local authorities who have realized the importance of the above treatment. They are *The Chamber of Mines, Pretoria Portland Cement Factory, and also the Johannesburg Municipality.*

We do not advocate treatment in Nursing homes because the patients are usually penniless and cannot afford the luxuries of private nursing homes.

Alcoholism is a damaging problem which has serious effects on a broad variety of social institutions, cultural and moral values. Alcoholism is a problem which, when it cuts, cuts deep.

We say it cuts deep because it is a disease that is so widespread in incidence, so widespread in its disrupting and deteriorating effects. We in Alcoholics Anonymous are attacking it, and attacking it hard, but our task could be so much easier if the hospitals in South Africa were fully empowered to act in a trigger capacity to set the attack in widespread motion. It is then that we could come in as friends, as guides and as sources of energy.

You might ask with what measure of success we work. Our claim, based on world statistics, is that of all the people that this organization has contacted, *success has come to 75 %*. People may question the exactitude of this claim; none will deny, however, that thousands and thousands have been helped. People who were just mildly alcoholic, and still hanging on to the weakening structure of a decent life, as well as hoboes of long acquaintance with the jail and gutter, have come out, have strengthened their lives, and have become assets to the community, and the family and the job; have become leaders instead of parasites.

These are not isolated cases. In fact many seem to have gained in stature from their experience with the disease.

In commending this widespread, broadly destructive, and deeply painful problem to you for urgent action, we can assure you of the individual and collective support of the rapidly growing organization, Alcoholics Anonymous.

For your information we wish to relate that the late Minister of Health, Dr. Karl Bremer was the first to realize this great national problem of alcoholism, and he called the First National Conference on Alcoholism in 1951. He explained then *that there were 70,000 known alcoholics in South Africa costing the Government £30,000,000 per year*, excluding expenses in General Provincial hospitals.

From this Conference emerged the first National Committee for the Treatment of Alcoholism, followed by the creation of eighteen subcommittees on the main centres by the Union, the main *aims and objects of which are:*

1. To increase public understanding of Alcoholism, its nature

and treatment; to make this knowledge effectual in attempting to solve the problem of alcoholism; to promote the tenet that the alcoholic can be helped; and to affiliate with any National Body having similar objects.

2. These objects shall be made affective by means of:
 - (a) educating the community on the problems of alcoholism.
 - (b) establishing an information centre.
 - (c) *promoting better hospital and clinical facilities for the treatment of victims of Alcoholism.*
3. The organization shall not engage itself in any activities designed to promote or prevent the sale or consumption of alcoholic beverages.

The information of these committees is the first step, the second step must be hospitalization, the third and final step, a thorough after-treatment, is already in existence, namely Alcoholics Anonymous. It is thus of paramount importance that hospitalization by Provincial hospitals find its rightful place.

SUBMITTED BY THE THIRD SOUTHERN AFRICAN
CONVENTION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

*This Memorandum was approved again at the
1955 Alcoholics Anonymous Convention*

IV

A GUIDE TO THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Introduction

THIS guide is intended as a simple, short and concise interpretation of the rules for sober living as compiled by the earliest members of the organization. The writers and editors are members of the Akron, Ohio, Group—where Alcoholics Anonymous was founded in 1935. Great care has gone into the preparation of the pamphlet. Most of the ideas and explanations were brought out in a series of instruction classes conducted by veteran members of the group.

The Twelve Steps are the logical process by which an alcoholic finds and maintains sobriety and becomes rehabilitated. It has been the history of AA that any alcoholic who has followed this programme without deviation has remained sober. Those who have tried to cut corners, skip over steps, have eventually found themselves in trouble. This has been the rule rather than the exception.

Upon being asked which is the most important of the Twelve Steps, one of the early members once replied with another question: "Which is the most important spoke of the wheel?" If a wheel has twelve spokes and one is removed, the wheel will probably continue to support the vehicle, but it will have lost strength. Removal of another spoke weakens it even more, and eventually the wheel will collapse. So it is with A.A. Removal of any of the steps will eventually result in a collapse.

It is important that the newcomer be introduced to the Twelve Steps at as early a date as possible. On these rules depends his full recovery. If you feel that the steps are a bit too complicated at first, you can introduce them to your "baby" in a simplified form, going into the complete programme latter. The condensed form:

1. We honestly admitted we were powerless over alcohol and sincerely wanted to do something about it. In other words, we admitted we were whipped and had a genuine desire to *quit for good*.

2. We asked and received help from a power greater than ourselves and another human. (*Note: In almost all cases that power is called God. It is, however, God as we understand him. For purposes of simplification, the word God is used in this pamphlet, meaning whatever higher power you choose to accept. In the case of the agnostic, the atheist or any unbeliever it is only necessary that he recognize some power in the universe greater than he is. He can call it God, Allah, Jehova, the Sun, a Cosmic Force or whatever he chooses. He is almost certain to admit that we live in an orderly world, a world where night invariably follows day, where spring follows winter, where corn ripens at a certain season, where the young are born on an invariable schedule, where the planets and other heavenly bodies maintain an orderly course. So it is only logical that there is some greater power behind this orderliness. Such an admission is all that is necessary.*)

3. We cleaned up our lives, paid our debts, righted wrongs.

4. We carried our new way of life to others desperately in need of it.

The Twelve Steps follow a logical sequence, one that has been used almost universally by successful members of A.A. They were carefully thought out by the founders of the organization and are as true and as necessary to the successful recovery from alcoholism today as they were when they were written.

First Step

*We admitted we were powerless over alcohol
—that our lives had become unmanageable.*

WITHOUT the first step there is no chance of recovery. It has been demonstrated over and over again that a person becomes sober and stays sober only when he is doing so for himself

and himself alone. He may become sober temporarily for the sake of some person, fear of some sort, because of his job, but unless he is sincerely, genuinely determined to sober up for himself, his days of sobriety are numbered.

It is difficult step to take. It is a step in which no assistance from an outside source is possible. The prospect must make it alone. It is not easy to admit defeat. For years we have said, "I can stop drinking any time I want to." For years we have believed that sobriety was "just around the corner." Tragically enough, we never rounded the corner; and we suddenly discovered, much to our dismay, that we could not quit. We were like rabid baseball fans who still hope for a miracle when the home team goes into the final innings trailing by half a dozen runs.

So we finally came to the fork in the road. We either honestly admitted that we had a problem or we continued sinking deeper and deeper into the bog of alcoholism, resulting in loss of mind or death. Until the admission is made, to ourselves, that our alcoholic problem has gone out of control we have no inspiration to stop drinking. But once that admission has been made the way is cleared.

It is at this point that Alcoholics Anonymous can step in and lend a helping hand in the remainder of the programme. The remaining steps are automatically made easier.

The symptoms of alcoholism are clearly defined. There are scores of them, but among the major ones are:

The inability to stop drinking after taking one drink.

The necessity for a drink in the morning to "Straighten up," that morning drink developing into another drunk.

Getting drunk at the wrong time. That is, getting drunk when every instinct tells us that the occasion is one calling for sobriety.

Inability to sleep without the use of alcohol.

Loss of memory during a drunk, and the deadening of memory even when sober.

The prospects will doubtless recognise many symptoms as his own when he listens to the stories of members of the group.

When he recognises them, it is imperative to impress on him that even if he isn't an out and out alcoholic he is studying hard to be one, and the time when he will be in serious trouble is not far away.

There is no known cure for alcoholism. Once a person becomes an alcoholic (he won't recognise it when he crosses the border line) he is an alcoholic for life. He may go years and years without touching intoxicants, yet when he does, he will be back in the same old squirrel cage again. Strangely enough, case histories prove that he will be worse than he was before.

So it is not only important that we admit that we are powerless over alcohol, but that we *continue* to bear in mind at all times that we are alcoholics. Only complete sobriety can make us and keep us normal.

If, as a newcomer, you can honestly say to your AA friend, "I have an alcoholic problem; I am certain that I am an alcoholic; I want to do something about it," half the battle is won. You are then open to teaching. Your mind is prepared to receive instructions in the AA way of life.

Second Step

Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

HAVING taken the first step, we naturally ponder what we can do to receive assistance. Looking into the past we discover that our attempts to give up alcohol through our own will power have always failed. It is comforting to know, however, that many great minds are agreed that trying to use will power is like trying to lift yourself by your bootstraps. The sincere efforts of our families and friends to help us have been unsuccessful. We have fancied ourselves as rugged individualists. We have liked to think "I am master of my fate, I am captain of my soul." A little honest thinking convinces us that we have been miserable failures as captains and masters.

Many of us tried doctors and hospitals. Some of us tried religion. We found deep sympathy, but we did not find sobriety. The results were always the same—we got drunk again.

Will power, help from families and friends, medicine and formal religion having failed, there is but one place to turn, that is to God as we understand Him. This is not as difficult as it might seem. You are not asked to go to church. You are not asked to seek the advice of a clergyman. You are only asked to quit trying to run your own life, and to keep an open mind. You are asked to accept teaching from a group of men who have ironed out the same problem that is bringing you deep trouble.

Perhaps the easiest approach of the Second Step is to think back to our childhood. When we got into trouble we ran to our mother or father, knowing there was complete safety in their arms. We told them our troubles and our minds were relieved. Picture, then, God as a universal Father, ready to listen to your troubles, ready to give you that same understanding and protection you received from your parents in childhood.

If your faith is not too strong at first, try solving it this way: Look around at your new friends in AA. The programme has worked for them. Their troubles were as great as yours. They were down-and-outers morally and in many cases physically. Yet they have followed the rules and managed to keep sober. It is just a matter of following the advice of your new friends. Follow the programme they lay out for you. Have faith in that programme. It has worked for them. It can work for you.

Third Step

*Made a decision to turn our will and our lives
over to the care of God as we understand Him.*

ONCE having come to believe there is a Power greater than ourselves, it is not too difficult to turn our lives over to the Power.

It was explained in the Second Step that as rugged individu-

alists we were rank failures. Forever looking into the future, we were forever disappointed when our plans failed. It is at this point that the Day by Day, or the Twenty-Four Hour plan comes to our assistance.

We have found that by giving up planning, by letting each day take care of itself—and it always will—we have been able to keep sober. We can't control the future. The past is done and can't be returned. And so if we can do a good job this day we are doing the best we possibly can. We start the day by deciding to stay sober for just twenty-four hours. We ask assistance from God to stay sober for that brief period. And when the day ends we thank God for the help He has given us. And on the next day and the next we follow the same programme.

This is the first step in turning our will and our lives over to God as we understand Him. From this small beginning we develop until we find we are no longer headstrong, we are no longer trying to run our own lives and making a sorry job of it.

Fourth Step

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

AGAIN we come to a step that requires courage. One of our chief reasons for drinking was to escape from ourselves. We were afraid of our own thoughts and knew we could escape from them through alcohol. We were afraid to face facts. We were afraid of our jobs, afraid of our families, afraid of responsibility. And we were afraid of thinking about them.

So having fortified ourselves by taking the major hurdles embodied in the first three steps, we find the time has come to actually do something definite about our problem. So very much like a bather diving into a icy lake we plunge into an inventory of ourselves.

And what do we find? We have been dishonest. We have lied.

We have cheated. We have broken hearts. We have stolen. We have slandered others. We have let down employers, friends and families. We have indulged in extra-marital activities. We have cursed God and Man. We have broken faith. We have smashed most of the laws of God and man. In all, we find that we are pretty sorry, miserable individuals. And every one of these facts can be traced back to alcohol.

To continue the inventory, we consider our physical selves, finding that health is impaired, memory is faulty, appearance is becoming more careless and slovenly, finances are at a low ebb. And having honestly taken ourselves apart, we wonder how on earth people have put up with us all the time.

It is a brave act to dissect ourselves thus. But we are fully compensated in the great feeling of satisfaction we experience in having at last squarely faced an issue. No man in his right senses wants to continue in this manner when he finds out what is wrong with him; so we logically come to the Fifth Step.

Fifth Step

Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

HERE again we find a very logical sequence. Having analysed ourselves, we find it makes sense to do something toward righting what we have found wrong. If we have the Fourth Step we have already fulfilled the first and second parts of the Fifth Step requirements. For a calm diagnosis of ourselves brings out defects. So we come to one of the oldest truths in the world—a trouble shared is a trouble cut in half.

To admit our wrongs to another person may sound like an insurmountable obstacle, but actually it is very easy if we go about it in the right way. And any good AA can show the path. It does not mean that we formally sit down with someone and say: "I have done wrong in the following manner: First I have been etc.

etc." If that were the method used, AA would not be the great organisation it is today.

The AA member will pave the way by first telling his story. The newcomer will be amazed at his frankness, at the ease with which he tells of usually unmentioned escapes. He will tell how rotten he has acted towards his family, or how he spent weeks of his life in jail or institutions; of dishonesties; of lies and subterfuges; the whole sorry picture.

One or two conversations like this and the new comer will begin to unburden himself. Things that he thought he would never tell a living soul start so come out. And as he shares his secrets his mind becomes unburdened of the terrific weight he has been carrying.

He literally gets his troubles off his chest, and one reason for drinking—drinking to forget—immediately disappears. It is at this point that real sobriety begins. Nor can an alcoholic be safe until he has unburdened himself. He begins to feel that he "belongs." And after he has stood up in public, leading his first meeting, he then feels that he is a full-fledged member.

The newcomer is definitely progressing, and is ready for the next two steps, which are grouped together for explanation and interpretation.

Sixth Step

We're entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Seventh Step

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

IT is very likely that we will willingly take the Sixth Step. As we scan the faces of our new friends in AA we see something we want. We see contentedness, freedom from fear, hap-

pininess, serenity and peace. We have been harassed by fear of losing our jobs, fear for divorce, fear of creditors; in fact, fears without end. We want to be like our new friends. And so, remembering back that no human agency has helped us before, we are willing to have God remove all defects of our characters.

But how do we ask Him to do it?

In the first place, we must remember at all times that we cannot bargain with God. In our drinking days we would get into trouble and pray something like this: "Oh, God, if You will get me out of this jam, I'll never trouble you again."

But whether or not you got out of that particular jam, you were right back into another one.

Instead of asking for outright help, ask for guidance. Ask merely to be shown the way, so that you can do your own part. As we said earlier in this booklet, ask for guidance for one day at a time. The day will grow into weeks, into months and into years. Yet it has been but one day at a time.

Do this humbly. Humility is sometimes difficult to attain. In our cups we were big shots. They were all out of step but Jim. Try to remember that regardless of who you are, you are but a tiny cog in the great universe. Look at a distant star at night. Remember that it took the light from that star a century or more to reach the earth. Remember the star on which you gazed could probably swallow the sun without noticing it. Consider that the earth is one of the lesser planets. And then consider your own physical insignificance. It will make you feel small and humble. And it is with that attitude that you should ask God to remove your shortcomings.

To be humble is not to grovel before men. It is not to become a doormat for society.

Yet, while in the flesh we are but infinitesimal specks, always remembering that the very essence of the Christian religion is that the soul of man is eternal. It is the most precious thing in the world. In the very least of us is a little spark of the divine. It is the divinity that makes us rise above the lower animals.

Humility is based on the recognition that we are the children of God. It is the consciousness of the need of a power greater than our own and a willingness to let that power control our lives.

Very simply put, humility is teachability, an open mind to the truth.

And when we can bring ourselves to this state, our recovery is well under way.

Eighth Step

✓ *Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and become willing to make amends to them all.*

Ninth Step

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

THESE two steps are in such direct relation to each other it is simpler to discuss them as one.

It is at this point that we begin the physical act of rehabilitation. Here is something physical that we can do. It is where we clean up the book of our lives and start a brand new ledger.

Our debts are of two kinds, the physical and the moral. A very satisfactory way to square accounts is to take a piece of paper and list your debts.

As you square accounts check off each one. It is a comforting process to watch the list grow smaller and smaller until it disappears. This is not an easy step. We would prefer to forget the past and its debts. But as long as we owe them, they are impossible to forget. They come back to haunt us.

And an alcoholic can't afford to be haunted by the past.

So we set about paying back our physical debts. There are those long-neglected bar bills that have driven us from some of

our favourite haunts. There is the doctor, and the butcher, and the baker, and the friend who loaned us money. There is the vase we broke on a drunken party at a friend's home. Perhaps our financial condition does not permit us to clean up our debts all at once. Do not hesitate to pay a dollar here and a dollar there. It is remarkable how soon they are cleared up, and we will find we have gained new friends. Or perhaps a bank or other financial institution will lump all your debts together and pay them off, taking your note. By all means pay off this note as rapidly as possible.

It is not so easy with the moral debts. Some of these we can never repay. There is your employer who has given you chance after chance—many more than you actually deserved. It would be well to let him know, not only by word but by deed that you are doing something to solve your drinking problem. He will be sceptical at first, perhaps, but he is going to admire you more and more as time passes.

There are your friends whom you have let down. A few apologies are in order here. There are those you have maligned, ridiculed, or slandered. As you make amends you will find yourself increasing in strength and stature.

Finally there are your dear ones who tried so hard to love you, to help you. How many times have you broken their hearts? How many times have you disappointed them? How many times have you promised to quit drinking, only to break the promise within a few hours or a few days? How many times have you let them down in a crisis? And yet they have stood by you. They have nursed you back to health when the worst thing wrong with you was a bad hangover. They have paid your debts. They have protected your name and reputation. They have fought for you when you could not fight for yourself. They have put up with your lies, your subterfuges, your wanderings into extramarital excursions, your dishonesties, your vile morningafter disposition. And they still love you.

Here is a debt that cannot be repaid by words—even though

you apologise until the very moment of death. This moral debt can never even fully be repaid by deeds. But it can be reduced to a minimum. The history of AA sparkles with families reunited and happily living together. But don't expect this miracle to happen overnight. Always remember, it took you years to become an alcoholic. Full rehabilitation cannot be expected in a day or a week or a month. The road to rehabilitation is not as long as the road to alcoholism, but neither is it as tough. If you have successfully made the Sixth and Seventh Steps you will fully understand this. Always remember, easy does it. We must take life and its problems a single thing at a time. The longest journey starts with but a single step.

Do not minimise that importance of the Eighth and Ninth Steps. Without having taken them you will never be on firm ground. Having conscientiously taken them, your future is more assured.

Tenth Step

*Continued to take personal inventory and
when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*

WE find in AA that after a few months of sobriety, after the alcohol is completely out of our systems, our problems are more mental than physical. It is very likely that a physical quirk started us on our drinking careers in the first place. It has been the rule rather than the exception in AA that as long as a person thinks straight he remains sober. When he goes back to the old alcoholic way of thinking, he gets drunk.

There are certain luxuries common to the average person that an alcoholic cannot afford. He cannot afford resentment, nor self pity. He cannot afford envy nor greed. He cannot afford dishonesty of any kind. He cannot afford procrastination, putting off till to-morrow what should be done to-day. He cannot afford to do anything that will cause him regret or disturb his peace of

mind later. And so we must keep our thinking straight and clear. We must recognise that our enemy is alcohol, and that enemy is lurking to slay us on the slightest excuse, at the slightest opening.

And so it is important that we continue to take personal inventory. Perhaps we find ourselves criticising some other member's method of staying sober. Instead, admire him for doing a fine job, whatever his method. Perhaps you resent something a leader has said. Forget it, it will be your turn to lead before long, and you will probably offend someone yourself. Perhaps you don't think your boss is advancing you fast enough. Just how long have you deserved to be advanced?

This list could be prolonged by thousands of words. But by this time you have advanced far enough in this new way of living to recognise what is good and what is harmful to you.

So take time off occasionally to check up. Are you doing your best? If you are, don't worry. You are making progress.

Eleventh Step

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.

WHAT have I to meditate about? This will be answered within a very few days after you have become associated with AA. For the first time in your life you are giving of yourself and for the first time in your life you will find that good is repaid with good. You will waken in the morning with clear head and eye. You will not be tortured with fears of what you did the night before. People will go out of their way to be cordial, kind and helpful. Happiness will shine in the faces of your loved ones. You will be free from fear, each day will add to your contentedness, you will not be dodging into alleys and crossing streets to avoid moral and physical creditors, you are beginning to have

the power to help others. Surely, you have much for meditation.

When you meditate on this new way of living you cannot but realise that there is a God above, guiding you through each successive day and night. As you become more conscious of this you will seem to better understand this Guiding Power. Before long you will find it is easy to pray. But if it doesn't come easily don't let it worry you.

Even churchmen will admit that prayer as we commonly hear it is phrased in language stilted and archaic. The Thee and Thou form has been used since the days of King James, when the present version of the Bible was written. If you don't like it don't use it. It is not hard to say before retiring, "Thank you, God, for keeping me sober to-day." Nor is it hard to say in the morning "Please, God, guide me in the path of sobriety and decent and useful living this coming day." Make your talk with your Guiding Power a personal thing. Give thanks for help and ask for assistance as though you were addressing your earthly father. Your sincerity is what counts, not the form of language you use. And be certain that the God to whom you pray will make it easier for you to work out your own salvation.

Twelfth Step

Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics, and to practise these principles in all our affairs.

NOW you are on your own. Your AA friends have given you your tools and showed you how to use them. From now on it is *your* job to fashion *your* life.

In the first place, don't be thrown by the phrase "Spiritual experience." It may bring to mind something supernatural—per-

haps the lightning flashing, the thunder resounding. Or, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, a blinding flash of light. A sudden spiritual experience or awakening is extremely uncommon. Perhaps a score out of the thousands in AA have experienced it. But it is a slow process for the average person. We are inclined to confuse spirituality with theology, dogma, creed and ritual. Just remember that most of us are pretty new to this useful, decent way of living, so we must learn the spiritual side of the picture slowly and simply.

Remember this simple thing: The entire structure of the Christian religion is built on Love. The word has many synonyms, such as Charity, Grace, Goodwill, Tenderness, Generosity, Kindness, Tolerance, Sympathy, Mercy and others. When we help a fellow being, when we are kind to one another, we are performing a completely spiritual act. Spirituality is simply the act of being selflessly helpful. If you will start with this simple explanation you will find that the green light has been flashed on. Christ taught you that there are two great commandments: to love God; and to love your neighbours as yourself. If you can follow these you will have no trouble.

What you don't understand don't worry about. It will all become clear in a short while. If anything puzzles you consult an older member of the group. He most likely will straighten out your thinking in a few words.

The work of an Alcoholic Anonymous is explained more fully by another pamphlet published in Akron (obtainable at the same post office address) called "A Manual for Alcoholics Anonymous." It explains the duties of the sponsor and newcomer.

If you have gone through the first Eleven Steps you have come far. It is now time that you are carrying on the work. You owe your sponsor and your group one thing—to carry the blessings of AA to some other alcoholic in need. You will be asked to call on a prospective member. Don't lose any time in doing so. Tell him your story. Tell him what you are trying to do. Tell him

what AA has done for others. If you think you are too new, just remember that he is even newer, and if you have been sober only one day, he will look on you as a veteran.

Before long you will have a "baby" of your own. Then you will really have something to live for. You will worry about him, you will try to keep sober for him, you will guide him to the best of your ability, you will almost suffer with him as he comes out of his alcoholic fog. In doing this you will be giving of yourself, and you will find new joy in living.

Always keep it before you that the more you put into this work the more you will take out of it. The harder you work, the more activities you get into, the easier will be your road to sober living. There is no excuse for missing a meeting. There is no excuse for not helping someone when asked to. Always bear in mind that your alcoholic problem is the *first thing* in your life. It comes before everything else. For without sobriety you will have nothing—no family, no job, no friends. And before too long you will have no sanity—and will lose life itself. Share this new life with others. It will repay you ten thousandfold.

In conclusion, practise these steps in all your affairs. The Twelve Steps are not something to be gone through and then forgotten. They are a set of rules for living that must be practised at all times, never forgotten.

Remember that you are an alcoholic, and but one drink away from drunkenness again.

Remember that you are completely dependent on God as you understand Him.

Remember to keep your thinking straight.

Remember that a wrong act will prey on your mind until you either do something to rectify it or get drunk.

Remember that defects will creep into your life if given half a chance.

Remember that if only through gratitude, we must help others in order to help ourselves.

And if at any time you feel uncertain of yourself, read the

Twelve Steps carefully, applying them to yourself. You will find an answer to your problem.

If the answer is not there, a telephone call or a visit to another member of AA will bring the answer.

THE SERENITY PRAYER

God grant me the Serenity

To accept the things I cannot change;

Courage to change the things I can,

And wisdom to know the difference.

So be it.

7 SEP 1978



